



THE POEMS OF  
EDMUND BLUNDEN

'Tis not how well an Author says,  
But 'tis how much, that gathers praise;  
Thus each should down with all he thinks,  
As Boys eat Bread, to fill up Chinks.

MATTHEW PRIOR

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## Preface

LOOKING over my papers, I find only a few of the many verses which I wrote as a schoolboy and a young soldier, apart from those which were printed at Horsham in 1914 (I wish someone would give me a copy of those), at Uckfield in 1916, and in my first attempt at a book published in London ("Pastorals," 1916). Without rising to Wordsworthian emotion on the theme of first happiness in poetic anticipations, I nevertheless admit that even the fragments which survive of my early versifying awaken a sense of a brighter morning. It is natural piety, now that I have the opportunity to make a broad selection from my first twenty years' verse, not wholly to exclude the records of a time that seemed full of music. The reader who thinks them dull scribblings will nevertheless sympathize with the writer's giving them a home. If there were any others that I should like to have had before me in making my choice, they would be the numerous pieces which I remember to have occupied and diverted me in the summer of 1917, while we were making ourselves ready to capture and consolidate the large extent of Belgium then borrowed by Germany. The labours of that summer, however, down to my neat transcripts of "ode, and elegy, and sonnet," vanished in the mud.

My subsequent poems have at least escaped that form of oblivion; most of them have been printed and from time to time collected into volumes. That this is so was due in the main to Mr. Siegfried Sassoon. To him, on my return to the Peace, I sent the small book printed at Uckfield in 1916—not, however, with the idea of intruding on the private time of a poet whose genius I honoured, but in the hope that he, as literary editor of the *Daily Herald*, might think the work worthy of a review. Mr. Sassoon



liked something in the book, and spread a favourable report of it; and, in recollecting that among the best things of my experience, I would name Mr. H. J. Massingham, Mr. Edward Marsh, Mr. Robert Graves, and Mr. J. C. Squire as immediate friends of the poetry. In 1920 Messrs. Sidgwick and Jackson brought out "The Waggoner," and I have to express here my gratitude to them for that and for their permission to reprint poems from the book in this volume. (In the table of Contents, these poems are marked with asterisks.) Yet, on consideration, I have thought it the natural plan to print "The Barn" and some other early poems not in the corrected and modified texts which went into "The Waggoner" but in their original awkwardness, as it took the fancy of Mr. Sassoon.

In 1922 "The Shepherd" was the means of my becoming one of Miss Alice Warrender's beneficiaries; the Hawthornden Prize may be recommended to all young writers, no matter how intense their independence and revolutionary zeal, as a valuable survival of ancient public spirit. The only fault in it is that only one winner a year is possible. The titles and contents of my books "The Waggoner" and "The Shepherd" have, I apprehend, done me a slight injustice; that is, they have labelled me among poets of the time as a useful rustic, or perhaps not so useful—one of the class whom the song describes:—

I sits with my feet in a brook;  
If anyone asks me for why,  
I hits him a whack with my crook—  
"It's Sentiment kills me," says I.

Great as is the power of country life over me, and of that stately march of the seasons above, around, below it, yet I have always suspected myself of some inclination to explore other subjects. Indeed, I might have replied more than once from my actual

state of mind, to some who conceived me to be a pastoral archaism, in the lines of my beloved Charles Churchill:—

Secure, for me,  
Let ——— smuggle nonsense, duty free:  
Secure for me, ye lambs, ye lambkins bound,  
And frisk, and frolic, o'er the fairy ground:  
Secure for me, thou pretty little fawn,  
Lick Sylvia's hand, and crop the flow'ry lawn . . .

I notice this, not ungratefully—for to be read as a picturesque interpreter of the English countryside, when so rich a literature stands and grows already in that field, is remarkably good luck—but with the desire that those who take up this book will not altogether skip those pages which are non-rural. They were derived from unstrained, general feelings.

It should be remarked here too, by way of preliminary, that War became part of the author's experience at a date so early (that is, in comparison with ordinary times) as to mould and colour the poetry almost throughout this book. The fact may be of use to explain or excuse metaphors and turns of thought which would now be foreign and elusive to the reader of a young poet.

"English Poems," "Retreat," "Near and Far," and the second part of "Undertones of War" are the later productions from which also the present edition is compiled, together with a few outlying or new poems. There is no satisfactory method known of classifying anybody's compositions on occasions like this; but I have tried to make groups of mine, within which the order of date is in the main preserved. The groups make, in a manner, little books within the whole, and that way, I believe, will be acceptable to the larger number of readers. The argument that a simple chronological sequence from first to last is best as show-

ing the author's mind in development is strong, but not until time has settled the whole question; meanwhile, I hope I have now and then—"date immaterial"—perceived a ray of light on a commonplace object and not lost the sense of it altogether in trying to communicate the coincidence.

I have left to the last one great obligation; Mr. J. C. Squire has read the proofs of this book with unusual promptitude and with particular insight.

E. B.

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*SOME EARLY POEMS*



## *Afterwards*

THOSE olden royal sunsettings  
Have dwindled from the barren years;  
A shadow hides us ancient kings  
And pioneers.

When shall we see the wonderways  
Where led the lustrous limbs of dawn,  
Whose sometime beauty wolfish days  
Have spoiled and gnawn:

From set of sun to rise of sun  
The dim ship communing with stars,  
And plashing onward till she won  
New harbour-bars:

Or, girt with sloth of yellow heat,  
Oared toilsomely to bight or creek,  
Or battling with great groundswell's beat,  
Sirocco's shriek?

Now, nothing is but talk and tale  
Of underwhirl and octopus:  
Of blind shelf whence the seamew's wail  
Was warning us:

Of blue rocks clashing hoarse with crime,  
Of Gorgon gazing life to stone,  
Of all things that the perished time  
Has made our own.

So up the bleak hill creeps the plough,  
Pulled by the slaving shambling steers;  
So from the sullen valleys now  
We turn in tears.

We till and sow the stubble ley,  
And labour on our little farms;  
No Siren sings us down from sea,  
No Circe charms.



## *The Sunken Lane*

BEHIND the meadow where the windmill stood  
There lies a swampy, unfrequented lane.  
There lodges all the high ground's winter rain,  
And stores sharp scent of sodden underwood.  
Tussocks and plantains coarse and celandines  
Trammel the creeping water, till at foot  
It rills out where the spiky horsetails shoot  
In tiny vision of primeval scenes.

So in this lane to-day my half-shut eyes  
Saw monstrous waterwoods and weeds coiled high,  
Whose heavy heat and shadow seemed to stun,  
And saurians horrible of form and size.

Softly the twinkling water travelled by,  
The jutting stones stood whitened with the sun.

## *Watching Running Water*

How swift and smooth this water glinters past!  
The dark green mosses of its twinkling lane  
Are trailed like pennons fully unfurled, astrain:  
These shallows hold the boundless cloudland glassed.  
And often as you watch the surly blast  
Drives uncouth shadows in a darkening train  
Through the bright voiceless brook: far off they wane,  
Like phantom fishes, fleet and wild and vast.

And some have found most strange and magical  
The fascination of a serpent's eye;  
But gloating on this water running by  
My tranced thought slumbers and my senses fall  
Like ebbing tides; and lulled, enchanted, all  
My spirit seems in readiness to die.

## *“A View of the Present State of Ireland”*

THE sun's noon throne is hid in hazy cloud  
Whence steals a yellow glimmer tremulous,  
Rimming the blue tall scarp, sullen and proud;  
Yet warm airs stray afield to solace us.  
Meantime the farmer drives his furrow on,  
Steadying his horses with his patient words,  
And where his husbandry has lately gone  
Comes foraging a motley drove of birds.

The year is young for such a mellow day;  
The month-old lambs and sprigs' dense burgeoning  
And arrogance of crows and house-dogs' play  
Foretell great beauty in the island spring—  
Only the dumb gray ruins, each way seen,  
Betray what has been and what might have been.

### *A Day Remorseful*

A DAY remorseful, heavy, dun,  
Had overcast the skies,  
As though the winter-vanquished sun  
Would never more arise.  
Brown trees drew out of blurred wet air  
A mockery of pearls,  
And tiny brooks seemed everywhere  
To speak in slakes and swirls.  
There was no hope within their home,  
There was not even bread:  
Within was gloom, without was gloom,  
And surely God seemed dead.  
Among the clenching mists they went,  
Along the lonely road,  
With nothing but their thoughts that meant  
More than a traveller's load—

By black ponds dull with dying sags,  
By heavy-hearted moors,  
By sheep-lanes trod to clogging quags,  
By uncouth farmyard stores.  
Ah, Christmas day all penniless,  
When these were brought so low!  
Yet now they feel from that dead stress  
A sullen pleasure grow;  
Most like the yew all stern and dark  
That grows in churchyard ground:  
The sexton has some pride to mark  
Its shadow and its sound.

### *Uneasy Peace*

LATE into the lulling night the pickers toiled,  
Stripping still by candle-light the bines uncoiled.  
In the valley went and came  
The mumbling trains with eyes of flame;  
Cold as death is, from the fen  
Blue fogs clammed wayfaring men.  
Tolling bells and crouching shades put work away;  
Lurching clowns and kerchered maids closed their long day

Doors along the hamlet green creaked to and closed.  
Lamps were lighted: by the inn some drank, or dozed.  
Now keen ears could plainly tell  
Bucket splashed in Saunders' well,  
Or the passing of the churr,  
Or the rainwise elmin's stir.  
Far-off booths by Weston store for folks from town  
Blared and flared an hour more, then dark came down.

Wandering scents of hops at kell, and stragglers' songs,  
Dimmed with distance, wove a spell not found in throngs;  
Till the people were abed,  
Some in tent and some in shed;

Till the twinkling lights went out,  
Lost in sleep's gigantic rout;  
    Shunting at the station still jangled and banged,  
    Still the steel rams by the mill in turmoil clanged.

Soon through oddling eastern yews began to well  
Glimmering beauty, golden news from Astrophel:  
Dawning of the queen of elves  
(That loves their dance in toadstool delves)—  
Till that moon-enmarvelled sky  
Charmed the coy clouds stealing by;  
    Till the weir-head shined afar, and dew-dipt meads;  
    While men were meditating war with which the world  
    still bleeds.

1916

### *The Yellowhammer*

WITH rural admixture of shrill and sweet,  
Forging his fairy fetter for the ear  
Of passing folks, from pollards close the wheat,  
The yellowhammer gives the sun a cheer.  
    Delighted with his leafy maze  
    Like dancing elves he nods and sways,  
    And now trills out a chime that's fair,  
    And now grates out what he might spare,  
While from the totter-grass gazes the humble hare.

1916

### *The Festubert Shrine*

A SYCAMORE on either side  
In whose lovely leafage cried  
    Hushingly the little winds—  
Thus was Mary's shrine descried.

"Sixteen Hundred and Twenty-Four"  
Legended above the door,  
"Pray, sweet gracious Lady, pray  
For our souls,"—and nothing more.

Builed of rude gray stones and these  
Scarred and marred from base to frieze  
With the shrapnel's pounces—ah,  
Fair she braved War's gaunt disease:

Fair she pondered on the strange  
Embitterments of latter change,  
Looking fair towards Festubert,  
Cloven roof and tortured grange.

Work of carving too there was,  
(Once had been her reredos),  
In this cool and peaceful cell  
That the hoarse guns blared across.

Twisted oaken pillars graced  
With oaken amaranths interlaced  
In oaken garlandry, had borne  
Her holy niche—and now laid waste.

Mary, pray for us? O pray!  
In thy dwelling by this way  
What poor folks have knelt to thee!  
We are no less poor than they.

May 1916

### *Festubert: The Old German Line*

SPARSE mists of moonlight hurt our eyes  
With gouged and scourged uncertainties  
Of soul and soil in agonies.

One derelict grim skeleton  
That drench and dry had battered on  
Still seemed to wish us malison;

Still zipped across the gouts of lead  
Or cracked like whipcracks overhead;  
The gray rags fluttered on the dead.

May 1916

### *In Festubert*

Now every thing that shadowy thought  
Lest peer with bedlam eyes at me  
From alleyways and thoroughfares  
Of cynic and ill memory  
Lifts a gaunt head, sullenly stares,  
Shuns me as a child has shunned  
A whizzing dragonfly that daps  
Above his mudded pond.

Now bitter frosts, muffling the morn  
In old days, crunch the grass anew;  
There where the floods made fields forlorn  
The glinzy ice grows thicker through.  
The pollards glower like mummies when  
Thieves break into a pyramid,  
Inscrutable as those dead men  
With painted mask and balm-cloth hid;

And all the old delight is cursed  
Redoubling present undelight.  
Splinter, crystal, splinter and burst;  
And sear no more with second sight.

1916

## *Sheepbells*

MOONSWEET the summer evening locks  
The lips of babbling day:  
Mournfully, most mournfully  
Light dies away.

There the yew, the solitary,  
Vaults a deeper melancholy,  
As from distant bells  
Chance music wells  
From the browsing-bells.

Thus they dingle, thus they chime,  
While the woodlark's dimpling rings  
In the dim air climb;  
In the dim and dewy loneliness  
Where the woodlark sings.

1916

## *The New Moon*

NEW-SILVER-CRESCENTED the moon forth came  
Daring the dark spies of a sullen flaw,  
Low-browed: on whom she set her eyes of flame,  
And plunged them in swift flight and murmuring awe.  
Sweet saffron havens then, and wistful calms  
Of infinite dew-crystal palaces,  
Were visible through delightful phantom palms,  
Blue olive groves, and other dim-plumed trees—  
And these but wraiths and cloudy fantasies.  
Meantime the reeds, that whispering wind embalms  
With whatso spikenard from the white clote came,  
Flutter, and home ply hern and pye and daw:  
Fearing the firmament to be the Khan  
Of grotesque Caliph or blotched Caliban.

1916

## *On Turning a Stone*

TROLLS and pixies unbeknown  
Lodged beneath a sunken stone!  
Their malevolence makes scream  
Children startled in a dream.

O their hundred flickering eyes  
Dazzled with day's enterprise—  
Skimble-skamble black they run  
Scared to rout by shining sun.

1916

## *Thiepval Wood*

THE tired air groans as the heavies swing over, the river-hollows  
boom;

The shell-fountains leap from the swamps, and with wildfire and  
fume

The shoulder of the chalkdown convulses.

Then jabbering echoes stampede in the slatting wood,  
Ember-black the gibbet trees like bones or thorns protrude

From the poisonous smoke—past all impulses.

To them these silvery dewes can never again be dear,  
Nor the blue javelin-flame of thunderous noons strike fear.

*September 1916*

## *The Barn*

### I

RAIN-SUNKEN roof, grown green and thin  
For sparrows' nests and starlings' nests;  
Dishevelled eaves; unwieldy doors,  
Cracked rusty pump, and oaken floors,  
And idly-pencilled names and jests  
Upon the posts within.



The light pales at the spider's lust,  
The wind tangs through the shattered pane:  
An empty hop-poke spreads across  
The gaping frame to mend the loss  
And keeps out sun as well as rain,  
Mildewed with clammy dust.

The smell of apples stored in hay  
And homely cattle-cake is there.  
Use and disuse have come to terms,  
The walls are hollowed out by worms,  
But men's feet keep the mid-floor bare  
And free from worse decay.

## II

A man was lying in the straw  
That hid him wholly but his head.  
The face was not an English face,  
But hinted of some Southern race.  
The eyes seemed strained, the eyes seemed dead.  
A farm boy came and saw.

He thought it was some gipsy man  
Had crawled in there to sleep the night:  
He cried to him to send him out,  
The form lay still despite his shout:  
He went, and saw his face dead white.  
Fear touched him, and he ran.

He found the farmer in the yard,  
Breathlessly he told the tale;  
The farmer looked him scornfully,  
But yet he went himself to see.  
He saw and turned a little pale,  
And drew his breath in hard,

And trudged away without a word  
Into the infield, where he told  
The aged ditcher what had come:  
The old man paused a moment, dumb,  
Then muttered, "Was he very cold?"  
    "Cold as a frost-clammed bird."

"Then did you touch his face and feel?"  
The farmer scanned the shrewd gray eyes  
But read small meaning there, and said.  
"I did, to see if he was dead."  
The answer struck him with surprise,  
    "It will not work you weal."

"That is no man that's lying chill  
And huddled dead-like in the straw;"  
But I maun see the thing myself,  
For I am feared it is an elf  
That bodes no good for fold and shaw  
    And hops upon your hill."

The two men turned, and back they tramped,  
Back to the barn, and both went in;  
The dusty sunlight flickered on  
A face all sallow under wan,  
Evilly puckered and pinched and thin.  
    A curse from the stark eyes lamped.

The old bowed ditcher stretched a hand  
And clutched the farmer's shoulder, "See,  
Its eyes are worse than any ghost's,  
They mean to curse your ricks and oasts.  
Yon is a devil—let it be,  
    But it will harm your land."

And even while he spoke, the face  
Had vanished, and the straw sank down.  
The odd ducks clacked beside the pond,

The cocks crowed sleepily from beyond  
The staddles of the hayrick brown.  
The thing had left no trace.

### III

The hoptime came with sun and shower  
That made the hops hang hale and good;  
The village swarmed with motley folk,  
Far through the morning calm awoke  
Noise of the toiling multitude  
Who stripped the tall bines' power.

Slatternly folk from sombre streets  
And crowded courts like narrow wells  
Are picking in that fragrant air;  
Gipsies with jewelled fingers there  
Gaze dark, speak low; their manner tells  
Of thievings and deceits.

And country dames with mittened wrists,  
Grandams and girls and mothers stand  
And stretch the bine-head on the bin,  
And deftly jerk the loosed hops in.  
Black stains the never-resting hand  
So white for springtide trysts.

And by and by the little boys,  
Tired with the work and women's talk,  
Make slyly off, and run at large  
Down to the river, board the barge  
Roped in to shore, and stand to baulk  
The bargee's angry noise:

While through the avenues of hops  
The measurers and the poke-boys go.  
The measurers scoop the heaped hops out,  
While gaitered binmen move about

With sharpened hopdog, at whose blow  
The stubborn cluster drops.

Such was the scene that autumn morn,  
But when the dryer in his oast  
Had loaded up his lattice-floors,  
He called a binman at the doors,  
"We want no more; the kilns are closed.  
Bid measurer blow the horn."

The binman found the measurer pleased,  
For hops were clean and work was through;  
He told him what the dryer said,  
The measurer nodded his gray head,  
Lifted the battered horn and blew.  
And so the day's work ceased.

It was but noon; the pickers went.  
The farmer and the measurer met.  
Both praised the hops that morning got,  
The farmer said, "So this is what  
The barn ghost brings, no trouble yet,  
And this is all it meant."

The measurer answered, "Maybe so,  
But you can speak before the crash.  
The sky is getting ugly looks."  
In thunder-yellow lights the rooks  
Flew crowding into elm and ash  
And gloom began to grow.

The air was loud with bleating droves,  
And hot and tense; the southern hills  
Were crushed in cerecloths, white like steam;  
The dust whirled round the homeward team,  
Rain splashed the whited windowsills,  
And rustled in the groves.

Thunder and thunder came to war.  
In startling suddenness vast cloud  
Dropped shreds of blackness, drooped in rain  
And deluged garths and hops and grain,  
And lightnings plunged and madly ploughed  
Through cloudy steep and scour.

The rainstorm harried all the vale  
In steady flood, no separate drops,  
Big bubbles oozed from sodden ground,  
The shower-butts flowed, the dykes were drowned;  
But down the valley all the hops  
Were hardly touched by hail.

The hail beset the hill alone,  
And seemed to prove the farmer curst;  
Jagged cruel hailstones struck the hops,  
And gashed the bines from the hop-pole tops,  
And eddying screaming winds outburst  
And flung the hop-poles prone.

The hops were ruined in an hour  
That took the toil of many a day;  
The farmer and the measurer saw  
The wasting of their work with awe,  
Till bright blue glittered through the gray,  
And hailstones lost their power.

This was the first of much distress  
That came upon the farm; the oast  
Was struck with lightning, and took fire  
As if good fortune's funeral pyre.  
Men whispered of the grimly ghost  
That caused the lucklessness.

Only the farmer never feared,  
Though footrot ravaged all his sheep.  
Redwater came and rotted most;

The shepherd muttered of the ghost,  
But he with patience stern and deep  
Held on though all men jeered.

Three years of evil circumstance  
And ceaseless labour left him poor;  
He barely won his daily bread,  
And all one autumn lay in bed  
For illness taken by mischance.  
The people shunned his door.

And stray folk plundered all his fruit,  
And broke his hedges into gaps:  
They scoured his copses and his crofts,  
And robbed his barns and apple-lofts,  
While he lay in a pale collapse,  
And could not stop the loot.

Yet without care of devil or man,  
And thinking straight, and fearing God,  
Once more the farmer came to health,  
And went to work to win back wealth,  
And dared to plough and dared to plod  
The farm that all would ban.

Luck veered towards him once again;  
His cobnuts in a scanty year  
Were household words for many miles,  
Men's faces changed from sneers to smiles,  
For good and wicked wishes veer  
With pleasure and with pain.

And clearing out a lumber-room  
He found a pot of golden coins,  
Tarnished, yet heavy yellow gold;  
There is a prize for being bold,  
And scorning what the world enjoins  
With words and looks of doom.

#### IV

So patient courage won the day.  
And when forebodings seemed fulfilled,  
The hardy sceptic shook his head,  
And took no note of what was said  
But boldly gathered, garnered, tilled,  
And scorned to go away.

The hamlet round the striving farm  
Made many gloomy prophesies.  
Some feared to work upon the place,  
Some told the farmer to his face  
That while that house and land were his,  
They must be bound with harm.

Yet to this day the barn remains  
Not brooding over fortune strange;  
The drowsy sunlight creeps and crawls  
In through the century-crannied walls,  
And every breeze that roves the grange  
Sings in the splintered panes.

All merry noise of hens astir  
Or sparrows squabbling on the roof  
Comes to the barn's broad open door;  
You hear upon the stable floor  
Old hungry Dapple strike his hoof,  
And the blue fan-tail's whirr.

The barn is old, and very old,  
But not a place of spectral fear.  
Cobwebs and dust and speckling sun  
Come to old buildings every one.  
Long since they made their dwelling here,  
And here you may behold

Nothing but simple wane and change;  
Your tread will wake no ghost, your voice

Will fall on silence undeterred.  
No phantom wailing will be heard,  
Only the farm's blithe cheerful noise;  
The barn is old, not strange.

The superstition dies away,  
And through the minds of country men  
A callous thought of life has passed,  
And myth and legend-lore are cast  
Far from the modern yeoman's ken,  
Fears of a bygone day.

Something is lost, perhaps: the old  
Simplicity of rustic wit  
Is banished by the rude disdain  
And pride that speaks a boorish brain,  
The pride that kills the fear of it,  
And strikes its kindness cold.

## *The River House*

Set in a circlet of silver rain,  
Lilac bows to the window-pane;  
The flagging elder dips, and scrapes  
The mossed brown wall at the will of the breeze,  
And the vine is sad, for her small green grapes  
Must shrivel and die with such a sky,  
And never may be like Tuscany's.

Looking out to the North we see  
Dark rains run over the distant lea;  
The clouds lean low on the ragstone hurst  
And slant slate roofing of its pens;  
And with relentless waterburst  
In swift dense shower they totter and cower  
Over the valleys and over the fens.



In the whispering attic the poor ghost treads;  
With the click of the clock and the splash from the leads,  
The room is drowsily dull, and dark;  
For all the rain we will be outdoors,  
Down to the bank of the weirpool. Hark  
To the foam and the spray of the tumbling bay;  
The weir is opened, the swirled rush roars.

Rooks caw fitfully high in the elms  
As the tempest gathers and overwhelms;  
The doves sob quietly in their cote,  
For they are quick to hear the moans  
Of immemorial grief that float  
In undersong alone along  
The shrouded moors and cromlech-stones.

There through the far trees goes a train,  
Carriage-roofs aglisten with rain;  
Over the river you hear it roar,  
Over the ponderous red steel bridge,  
Then it leaps into sight once more,  
Shrills its scream, and shuts off steam  
At the tiny halt on the misty ridge.

Not many steps, and we reach the place  
Where the river parts from the old mill-race;  
The mill is used for a powerhouse now,  
And the mill-wheel turns the dynamo,  
But still on the walls is the peach-tree's bough,  
And the ivy still is dear to the mill  
And black-tailed chub still shoal below.

The fields are desolate in the storm,  
And the hare is sheltering in her fourm:  
Stoats are none that yesterday  
Slid snakelike through the bents to steal  
But the high lark soars to his roundelay,  
And voles snap reeds, and through the weeds  
Black moorhens scurry, above the wheel.

The fields are desolate under the gray;  
But once they have seen the sun to-day.  
He came up in a blood-red lift  
That blackened like the red blood spilt,  
And through a sudden awful rift  
There came a gleam, a fiery dream  
Of God's eye watching demon guilt.

So heavily drives the rain, and lashes  
The open pool into white mist-plashes,  
And even under the alder's shelter  
The shallows are sullyng into a haze,  
And the wind and the weir make small waves welter  
The red bank peacelessly, fecklessly, ceaselessly,  
And backward the huddling current sways.

The roar of the lasher dulls the sound  
Of the plunging mill-wheel's rusty round.  
Yet from behind the door in the bank  
Waters seethe in a bubbling leap,  
And pent in brickwork, mouldy and dank,  
As steel rams toil and thud, they boil  
And the culvert casts them into the deep.

Come to the trees at the foot of the weir,  
Four hawthorn trees that stand so near  
That their roots have thrust out into the pool.  
There we can watch the turbulent foam,  
Fantastically beautiful,  
And eddies askance in wild jagged dance,  
Jewelled and pearled to revel and roam.

You would scarcely think, to see the might  
Of the waters spurting and writhing white,  
That yesterday the lazy stream  
Lay under the hot noon still as stone,  
Except where old ungainly bream  
Rose from their slime to bask and prime  
Where glades of drowsy sun were strown.

Clear by the tricklings of the dam,  
Ruddy-finned roach and bronze carp swam;  
    With here and there a perch blue-barred,  
    And two foot down a moody pike  
    Looking with small eyes, small and hard,  
At the shoals that lay a yard away,  
    But far too glutted and drowsy to strike.

Yet even then I thought I spied  
In the coppiced shade of the farther side,  
    Where the jutting oak-stub blackened a space,  
    Evilly under the surface lurking,  
    The water-spirit's livid face,  
Medusa-fashioned, deadly-passioned,  
    Setting a perilous whirlpool working.

And now the drowned boughs swirl and toil  
Up and down as the currents coil;  
    And where small eels swarmed up the weed  
    And slippery green of the water-gate,  
    Turbulent terror and clamour is freed,  
That ploughs and troubles the pit into bubbles  
    And undercurrents of treacherous hate.

The water forces its shining shares  
Fast through the fallow pool, that bears  
    The certain beauty of strength and speed,  
    The luring thrall and the dizzying spell,  
    The blind mad whirlpool's gloating greed,  
That bids men leap and be drowned deep  
    Whose minds are racked on a wheel of hell.

Some worship mountains, some the sea;  
But a river god is the god for me,  
    And to live in a house by the din of a weir,  
    Or a mill with a mill-head huge and deep,  
    And yellow lilies and white in the mere,  
Or a farm that looks on rambling brooks  
    Is a thing I hold as dear as sleep.

Whether the rains are abroad, as now  
To darken the river, and mat the brow;  
Whether the sun makes shadow sweet,  
And beckons the rudd and bream to rise,  
Or whether the floods of winter beat  
In ruin and riot by sluice and eyot,  
The river is dear, and shrewd, and wise.

A sullen and lonely god is he,  
And he loves few; the alder tree  
Hears him whispering under her boughs  
And whispers answer; in nights of flood,  
He treads around the river-house,  
And makes low call to the mossed brown wall,  
And watches the moon and black cloud scud.

But if you go day after day  
And rove his banks, and watch his way,  
Plunge in his pools, and thrud his fords,  
And snare the snig eels under the stones,  
You will hear him sing in gentle chords  
And quiet rhymes and fairy chimes  
That yours is the love to which he owns.

He is kindly at heart though seeming rude,  
He is fond of the sun and the solitude;  
Gives drink to oxen and men alike,  
Turns the mill-wheel sturdily,  
Draws waste water from channel and dike,  
And carries the dead things down to a bed  
In a quiet pit of the moving sea.

But there is an anguish strong on him,  
The water-spirit, lustful and grim,  
She rives him, writhes him, claw at clutch,  
And chuckles and gorges with throat of clay,  
And the river's churning spasms are such  
That he cries through the gloom for a sleep and a tomb,  
And warns the wandering foot away.

## *The Silver Bird of Herndyke Mill*

By Herndyke Mill there haunts, folks tell,  
A strange and silver-breasted bird,  
Her call is like a silver bell,  
So sweet a bell was never heard,—  
The Silver Bird of Herndyke Mill,  
That flies so fast against the blast,  
And scares the stoat with one soft note—  
To hear her makes a man's blood chill.

The Charnel Path behind the Church,  
When nights are blackest, makes me pause,  
But there 'tis only magpies perch  
And churning owls and goistering daws,  
I fear the churchyard spooks much less,  
For all their flaming, starving eyes,  
Than that same Silver Bird which flies  
At times through Herndyke wilderness.

In summer time the carps and rudds  
Sun in their scores below the weir:  
In winter time the hurtling floods  
Forbid a soul to venture near.  
But summer time and winter time  
Few people dare to loiter there—  
Though mushrooms spring in many a ring—  
For fear the Silver Bird should chime.

The stranger hears me with a smile.  
Why should a man so fear a bird?  
But listen to my words awhile,  
But listen till the whole is heard;  
And if your conscience is opprest  
With shameful act or wicked will,  
You durst not go to Herndyke Mill  
Where flits the bird with silver breast.

Below the pleasant meeting-place  
Of deep main stream and dwindled leat,  
Where flock and glint the faint-heart dace,  
By banks deep-grown in rabbit's-meat,  
A little footbridge used to be—  
A single plank from bank to bank,  
A hand-rail white to see at night—  
That led into a shrubbery.

In spring the sunlight green and cool  
Dries up the seething grounds, and makes  
The kingcups yet more beautiful,  
And ushers out the bright green snakes.  
But no one loves the aguish mist  
That writhes its way at eventide  
Along the copse's waterside:  
So rarely come they there to tryst.

No lovers loiter there; alone  
The homeless man may break the bounds,  
But in the years now fled and flown  
The miller used to mind these grounds,  
And sometimes on the bridge he stood  
In twilight peace, at day's decease;  
Wrapt in his thought, as one who sought  
To seem at one with stream and wood.

Now as he leant upon the rail  
One glimmering summer night, when glooms  
Were hearkening to the nightingale  
And lading with dim dew the blooms,  
Out of the woodside quietly  
An aged woman came, not fair,  
But crowned with shining silver hair,  
And craved a little charity.

"Sir, I am faint with walking far,  
And penniless, and very old,

The shallows, how they shake and swirl  
As chilled by Autumn's trembling hands,  
Their yellowed leaves so spin and twirl  
That down they drop like wasted brands.  
They clog and huddle in the stream  
That's ruffled with the dismal draught  
Until their golden foundered craft  
Are jostled by the groping bream.

There seems no heart in wood or wide,  
The midday comes with twilight fears,  
The winds along the coverside  
Pause like bewildered travellers—  
The miller picked his gloomy way,  
Intent to hound from off his ground  
A travelling man whose caravan  
In cover of the coppice lay.

The sighing of the year was borne  
Deep, deep into the miller's soul.  
The very footbridge looked forlorn,  
And *plop* plunged in a startled vole.  
What shadows made his fancy grim  
Born of the outcast woman's word—  
When suddenly a silver bird  
Was hovering, calling over him.

Her chiming channelled through his brain,  
Her bright eyes held him, spelled him there.  
He struck at her, he struck in vain,  
She fluttered round him, strange and fair.  
And with her was that holy power  
So pure-intense as stilled his sense  
And in his ears the voice of tears  
Grew slowly like a mournful flower.

The daylight dwindled from his eyes,  
A haze grew on him filled with moan:

His dazed soul stumbled with surmise,  
He walked the wilds of fear alone.  
O who can tell what dreadful days  
He seemed to pass in this wild spell,  
Through what intolerable hell  
Of phantoms with their searching gaze!

At last from glooms the silver breast  
Took fashion, and the dull day's light  
Was round him (never light so blest),  
And then the Silver Bird took flight.  
O miller, see your punishment,  
Your golden gain has brought forth pain,  
Your spoutsman's-boy has more of joy  
Whose poor wage means his mother's rent.

Now, many a month and many a year  
Has died away on holt and hill  
Since that rich miser told his fear  
And fled away and shut the mill.  
And such stark tales have come to me  
Whom neighbours call Poor Poaching Jack  
As every time have turned me back  
From footing Herndyke shrubbery.

I've shot down pheasants from their roost  
By moonlight in the woods of squires:  
In open day I've often noosed  
The vicar's pike with cunning wires.  
I've fooled a hundred keepers round,  
Risked Redstone Gaol and did not fail;  
But yon woodside I never tried  
For fear of that which guards the ground.

The waters underneath the weir  
Hold battenning monstrous fish by shoals:  
And if a man is conscience-clear  
He well may come with baits and trolls;  
And sure his creel would soon be full



If, fearless of the bird of good,  
He angled all along the wood,  
And in the blackness of the pool.

And nettles bunch where pansies flowered  
Within the garden's gap-struck pale,  
And where the mill-wheel's spouting showered  
The weedy waters well nigh fail:  
And resolute wasps come year by year  
Through bank's warm clay to make their way  
And build their nests, whence on their quests  
Throughout the little garth they steer.

Among those twisted apple trees  
The little sunlights do abound:  
They burn along like yellow bees  
And chequer all the shadowy ground:  
The golden nobs and pippins swell  
And all unnoticed waste their prime,  
For few folk love to hear the chime  
That brings the world of woe pell-mell.

By Herndyke Mill there haunts, folks tell,  
A holy silver-breasted bird;  
Her call is like a silver bell,  
So sweet a bell was never heard,  
The Silver Bird of Herndyke Mill,  
That flies so fast, against the blast,  
And frights the stoat with one soft note—  
To hear her makes a man's blood chill.

*January-March 1916*

## *Stane Street*

### I

MOWN, strown are the grayhead grasses,  
Red sorrels with them lie;

The buttercup's beauty passes  
And the proud moon-daisies die.

The birds have hid in the coppice,  
For the drought has had long lease,  
Sleepy with bees and poppies;  
Birdsongs, brooksongs cease.

Brown stems and wan white petals  
Of crowsfoot trammel the brook;  
Wild hops and sloven nettles  
Shut out its sunny look.

And muddy and busy with midges  
Is every tarrying plash,  
And under the culverts and bridges  
Horse-stingers thwart and flash.

Our Arun is sluggish and fenny,  
Like water of marlpit or moat,  
Meshed thick with slimed weeds many  
And stout-stemmed yellow clote.

## II

This way the broad leys seemed to me  
As we went riding on  
Where rode the Roman cavalry  
Two thousand years ago:  
The Stane Street, clad in dust and glare,  
Had lost the mystery  
That garlands relics great and rare  
Of far antiquity.

Yet there was beauty all the same,  
As we went riding on,  
In every sturdy yeoman name  
The signposts bade us con:

As Storrington berhymed of late,  
And (ere that) Alversane,  
Whence all the hazed hills seemed to wait  
With blurred weak eyes for rain.

And as we came to Pulborough town  
Storm rose from Arundel,  
The first hot rain came splashing down,  
Thunder began to knell.  
The tempest worked up fever-pace,  
White hissed the bubbles flung;  
Wild sudden freshets ran their race,  
The fleetfoot winds were sprung.

We sheltered till the short-lived shower  
Had stilled the thunder's wrath,  
And fragrances of leaf and flower  
Flew forth from plat and swath:  
The bevying clouds thinned into light  
Like locks of silvery hair;  
And tree and spire, and house and height  
Looked clear through glistening air.

Then southward still we went well pleased,  
In love with every rural thing,  
And, now the heat-god was appeased,  
The sweet small birds were brave to sing:  
But, ere another mile was rode,  
We came to Hardham, shy as fair  
And by the little church we slowed  
Descrying steps of beauty there.

### III

The little gate latch clinked and stopped,  
We trod the churchway, white and warm  
With flagstones drying from the storm,  
Though lichened gravestones still stood sopped  
And splashes from the church eaves dropped.

All hushed we reached the porch, and found  
The door ajar: we entered in,  
Such trancing rest from dust and din  
Held us a moment's space spell-bound.  
Then we for gladness looked around.

The dim-traced paintings on the wall,  
The brown initialled altar-rail,  
The altar with its bredded vail,  
The vague light that the panes let fall,  
The pulpit and the vestry small—

No trophies, nō begilded shows  
Can bring the soul of holiness  
To make her hermitage and bless  
Where pride and strife and dogma prose  
To hypocrites in gaudy rows.

The smallest things are made divine,  
The old low pews, the narrow tiles  
Deep red, that pave the tiny aisles,  
The books whose gildings no more shine—  
O hamlet church, O heavenly shrine.

Wherever Faith kneeled simple-strong  
Of old, the memory abides;  
Dead rose whose silken fragrance glides  
Still from her leaves; tolled bell whose song,  
The ringer ceasing, lingers long.

July 1915

## *The Gods of the Earth Beneath*

I AM the god of things that burrow and creep,  
Slow-worms and glow-worms, mouldwarps working late,  
Emmets and lizards, hollow-haunting toads,  
Adders and effets, groundwasps ravenous:

The weasel does me homage rustical,  
And even surly badger and brown fox  
Are faithful in a thousand things to me.  
From these and myriads more  
Hark to the praises murmurously abroad,  
This very slumbrous sound of glowing noon,  
All through the low-shorn grass:  
The morning hedger with his brishing-hook,  
That never saw me, knows me to be near  
To greet the greetings of my tiny folk.  
Six brothers too I have, gods like to me,  
Whose sort I will declare: and maybe you,  
Wayweary traveller, with your broad bright eyes,  
That well can reverence us the lesser gods,  
Shall see themselves anon.

And first of him who, but for me, were least.  
He has dominion over every plant  
That stretches tapering root, or twists a mass  
Of thrusting fibres white as bleachen bones,  
Or sends long straying creepers: his are roots  
Of every tree: and such love waits on him,  
And such free faithfulness that all trees give,  
That some bow down their green boughs worshipping  
So that they touch the ground, and you may see  
In yonder avenue of limes, how some  
Have hidden down-curved branches in the earth,  
For him; and so delightful is his care  
That the lopped tree, be it but stub or stock,  
Thrives, and begems its leafits in a year.  
Even the pales that husbandmen set up  
Have put forth roots—so kindly is his care,  
Shown to his worshippers.

Sir, tell me whether you at any time  
Have seen a river-god (since your clear heart  
Keeps your eyes clear to glimpse all things that few  
May see)? Ay, you have seen a river-god,  
Dear honest man of strong simplicity;

Then have you spied in summer, when the weeds  
Thicken and lazily swelter to the sun,  
In some clear water that the stonefish love  
One moving softly in a dream of good  
In form like this of mine?  
He is my brother, fifth among the gods:  
He holds the river-beds and watersands  
In fee: there is no yellow or blue clay  
Paving a river's travel, no flat rock  
On which deep waters tarry, no gold sand  
Of shallows with the shealings shining white,  
But it is consecrate of old to him,  
And with it all its creatures honour him—  
All fishes, save the fierce unfaithful eel  
That climbs flood gates and travels through wet fields  
From pool to pool; or down to the sea's wild works,  
Slides past a thousand eyots lovelessly.  
The shells that lie along the paven strand  
When summer shrinks the water—think you these  
Were clustered by the winter's heaping floods?  
Not so could they entangle sunset pink  
In crystal frail depicting within:  
Not so could I read words of lovely say.  
But they were tinted with the god's own hand,  
The god's own hand set them in charactery.  
He hollows the green bank, knit with sinewy roots,  
That fish may haven there when too clear suns  
Have made them languish: for he loves them well.  
Therefore, when thunder spreads his pirate flag,  
Black, threatening crime, and up the shallow comes  
Some eel as thick as any reaper's wrist,  
He roves the reeds and tramples up the sands  
In warning to the fishes young and small;  
And hence the small-eyed eel is led astray  
Thinking to see the pike his enemy.

Such is the river-god.  
And fourth among us, not unlike to him,  
Living amid the dead calm of deep waters

Of sullen lakes and pits (unfathomable,  
By all the peasants' tales) there is a god  
Of white and golden water-lily pageants.  
The languorous water-lily, that some call clote,  
Through his perpetual labourings, can climb  
Up from the silt, that flees the light of day,  
Still striving and still striving up to air,  
Proclaiming beauty out of common things  
To those that pass. What queen more queenly is?  
What love more lovely than the slumbrous clote,  
Lingering along the blue stream's mooned curves?  
Most worthy she the endeavour of a god.  
And with such beauty ever in desire  
Her god is pleased to live nigh undescried  
Deep down: yet you shall see him of a morn  
Shapen like mist, a little lovely form,  
Hovering above the sleeping lilies: then  
The great sun strides on, frightening the pearl mists,  
And with them flees the lily-god away.

Up on the hill, where brambling hops are now  
Near firm enow for picking, men have found  
Gold pieces lying bedded in the earth,  
Trinkets of other centuries, treasure trove;  
Nor this without its god, the miner god.  
To whom all buried coins, all precious things,  
All strakes of gold and silver amid rocks,  
All porphyries, agates, emeralds, starry stones  
Are known and charted. From his treasures  
He thins frail gold for crowns of daffodil,  
And inlays silver leaves for ladysmocks.  
With rubies is his palace underground  
Windowed, to let the cavern's twilight in;  
Of alabaster are his buttresses,  
Of pallid mica are his little doors,  
And all the walls of gold, the walks of gold.  
So silver-sandalled down those golden ways  
He triumphs, and his people cry his praise,  
Even the jewels and stones called dumb cry out.

Above him, yet not greatest,  
The god of waters vanished underground  
Calls to me, bids me tell of him. Strange streams  
Flow flagging in the undescribed deep fourms  
Of creatures born the first of all, long dead:  
Wherefore he guides their channels and stifled songs.  
And fills them with delight of headlong falls  
To keep the echoes roaring all through time.  
And blind fish grow  
Among those waters, for small light comes there;  
He makes the white weeds live that are their food,  
And heals them from all taints and maladies.  
No man has seen this god: who plies along  
The long lakes never dreamed nor plummeted,  
The tiny runlet trickling steep through rocks,  
The river gliding darkly tunnelled in,  
And of his realms is proud as any king.

Of six gods have you heard, their emperies  
And deathless works: and over us all is set  
One greater. He with kingcraft marvellous  
Brings out of death the loveliest looks of life,  
And from corruption with his alchemy  
Images beauty: where the dead leaves piled,  
Lo, wind-flowers and the etched uncrumpled fern,  
And where the corpse was hidden, wallflowers,  
And in the mossed dank oak-stub, primroses.  
And those who wander in November's woods  
Find toadstools twined and hued fantastically  
Yellow, and yellow-mottled red, and black,  
In all antique and unimagined vogues.  
For these are his ephemeral delights,  
Made for the whims of beauty, and then gone.  
He stells the meadows in similitude  
Of stars in black sky-spaces, in his hands  
He catches filtering flames of morn and eve,  
To be the sunshine of the buttercup,  
The sunlight of the darnel. Where graves are,  
He haunts to make unloveliness be blossoms;



Where hosts have hewn down hosts in war, he is  
Ever enharvesting their sepulchres  
With promises of things divine, wild flowers  
Innumerable, hues unsurpassable—

These seven gods whose sort I have declared,  
Traveller, are templed in a secret shrine.  
For when we move in shadows through your world,  
We see the shrines of gods: we hear their hymns  
Filling their marble immemorial domes  
In sworn allegiance to a mystery.  
All gods that have been love this mystery,  
Nor we the least. O linger here and listen  
To sorceries and rituals dear to us.  
Good traveller, through your weather-beaten look  
A radiance ever lightens out to me,  
Born of a loyal love: but now the pipe  
Of pewits newly fledged, from sunken ground,  
Brimmed with the moving mists that usher cold,  
Shrills clear, and warns me to the waterpit.  
Across the sandy path the tiny frogs  
Go yerking, and already it grows dark.

\* \* \* \*

With that the Traveller's eyes were sealed afresh,  
So that he saw the god no more: but then  
He thought he heard a music spangled over  
With strange delightful echoes, frail as pearls,  
And words came burgeoning in his heart, like these:

With seven lamps for seven saints—  
*Cry we up' the thundering chasm—*  
Lighting seven effigies,  
Marble writhed to martyr-spasm—

With seven coffins small and queer—  
*Run, echo, up the tarn's rupt wall—*  
Wherein are prostrate effigies  
Of seven sinners, silver-small—

With seven niches odorous—  
    *Fly, murmur, up the flinty shelves—*  
Wherein are seven gods enshrined;  
    This temple hold we for ourselves.

The long lake in the caverned moor  
    Is sluiced and sucked into the pit,  
And rumbles ever with a roar  
    Into the shrine prepared for it—

The falling water is the priest,  
    The thunderous water is the quire;  
And we seven gods are well appeased  
    With fetch-light lamps that twinkle and twire.

And winter after winter dies  
    But we die never till the earth  
Grows dizzy, watched by countless eyes,  
    And then's the end of all her mirth.

*July 1915-March 1916*

### *“Transport Up” at Ypres*

THE thoroughfares that seem so dead to daylight passers-by  
Change character when dark comes down, and traffic starts to ply;  
Never a noisier street than the Rue de Malou then becomes  
With the cartwheels jolting the dead awake, and the cars like  
    rumbling drums.

The crazy houses watch them pass, and stammer with the roar,  
The drivers hustle on their mules, more come behind and more;  
Briskly the black mules clatter by, to-day was Devil's Mass;  
The loathly smell of picric here, and there a touch of gas.

From silhouette to pitchy blur, beneath the bitter stars,  
The interminable convoy streams of horses, vans, and cars.  
They clamour through the cheerless night, the streets a slattern  
    maze,  
The sentries at the corners shout them on their different ways.

And so they go, night after night, and chance the shrapnel fire,  
The sappers' waggons stowed with frames and concertina wire,  
The ration-limbers for the line, the lorries for the guns:  
While overhead with fleering light stare down those withered  
suns.

### *January Full Moon, Ypres*

VANTAGED snow on the gray pilasters  
Gleams to the sight so wan and ghostly;  
The wolfish shadows in the eerie places  
Sprawl in the mist-light.

Sharp-fanged searches the frost, and shackles  
The sleeping water in broken cellars,  
And calm and fierce the witch-moon watches,  
Curious of evil.

Flares from the horse-shoe of trenches beckon,  
Momently soaring and sinking, and often  
Peer through the naked fire-swept windows  
Mocking the fallen.

Quiet, uneasily quiet—the guns hushed,  
Scarcely a rifle-shot cracks through the salient,  
Only the Cloth Hall sentry's challenge  
To someone crunching through the frozen snows.

### *Les Halles d'Ypres*

A TANGLE of iron rods and spluttered beams,  
On brickwork past the skill of a mason to mend:  
A wall with a bright blue poster—odd as dreams  
Is the city's latter end.

A shapeless obelisk looms Saint Martin's spire,  
Now a lean aiming-mark for the German guns;  
And the Cloth Hall crouches beside, disfigured with fire,  
The glory of Flanders once.

Only the foursquare tower still bears the trace  
Of beauty that was, and strong embattled age,  
And gilded ceremonies and pride of place—  
Before this senseless rage.

And still you may see (below the noon serene,  
The mysterious, changeless vault of sharp blue light)  
The pigeons come to the tower, and flaunt and preen,  
And flicker in playful flight.

### *Clear Weather*

A CLOUDLESS day! with a keener line  
The ruins jut on the glinting blue,  
The gas gongs by the billets shine  
Like gold or wine, so trim and new.

Sharp through the wreckage pries the gust,  
And down the roads where wheels have rolled  
Whirls the dry snow in powdery dust,  
And starlings muster ruffled with cold.

The gunners profit by the light,  
The guns like surly bandogs bark;  
And towards Saint Jean in puffs of white  
The anti-aircraft find a mark.

And now the sentries' whistles ply,  
For overhead with whirring drone  
An Albatros comes racing by,  
Immensely high, and one of our own

From underneath to meet it mounts,  
And banks and spirals up, and straight  
The popping maxims' leaden founts  
Spurt fire, the Boche drops like a weight:

A hundred feet he nose-dives, then  
He rights himself and scuds down sky  
Towards the German lines again,  
A great transparent dragon-fly.

### *Zillebeke Brook*

THIS conduit stream that's tangled here and there  
With rusted iron and shards of earthenware,  
And tawny-stained with ruin trolls across  
The tiny village battered into dross—  
This muddy water chuckling in its run  
Takes wefts of colour from the April sun,  
And paints for fancy's eye a glassy burn  
Ribanded through a brake of Kentish fern,  
From some top spring beside a park's gray pale,  
Guarding a shepherded and steeped dale,  
Wherefrom the blue deep-coppiced uplands hear  
The dim cool noise of waters at a weir.

And much too clear you bring it back to me,  
You dreary brook deformed with cruelty,  
Here where I halt to catch the day's best mood,  
On my way up to Sanctuary Wood.

*April 1917*

### *Trees on the Calais Road*

LIKE mourners filing into church at a funeral,  
These droop their sombre heads and troop to the coast,  
The untimely rain makes mystery round them all  
And the wind flies round them like the ghost  
That the body on the blackened trestles lost.

*Miserere* sobs the weary  
Sky, sackclothed, stained, and dreary,  
And they bend their heads and sigh  
*Miserere, Miserere!*

With natural dole and lamentation  
They groan for the slaughter and desecration,  
But every moment adds to the cry  
Of that dead army driving by.

1917

### *Bleue Maison*

Now to attune my dull soul, if I can;  
To the contentment of this countryside  
Where man is not for ever killing man  
But quiet days like these calm waters glide.  
And I will praise the blue flax in the rye,  
And pathway bindweed's trumpet-like attire,  
Pink rest-harrow and curlock's glistening eye,  
And poppies flaring like St. Elmo's fire.

And I will praise the willows silver-gray,  
And where I stand the road is rippled over  
With airy dreams of blossomed bean and clover,  
And shyest birds come elfin-like to play:  
And in the rifts of blue above the trees  
Pass the full sails of natural Odysseys.

1917

### *The Pagoda*

From the knoll of beeches peeping  
On the patterned water sleeping  
Stands the Chinese temple yet,  
Heaped with dead leaves, all alone.

Faded are its amber panels,  
Where the channering insect channels,  
And the blood-red dragons fret  
That glared so grimly thereupon.

Mother-pearl and pink shells once  
In formal geometricals  
Gemmed the arrased inner wall,  
But tapestries and frieze are gone.

The small robin reconnoitres,  
Unabashed the woodmouse loiters:  
Brown owls hoot at shadow-fall  
And deathwatch ticks and beetles drone.

But I see the shamed pavilion  
Bright with yellow and vermillion,  
And, in the sun's hallucination,  
Squired by mandarin Corydon,

Satin-sandalled Chloes glimmering,  
Gryphon-urns of Bohea shimmering,  
And the long lost generation  
Seems once more to be my own.

1917

### *Mont de Cassel*

HERE on the sunnier scarp of the hill let us rest,  
And hoard the hastening hour,  
Find a mercy unexpressed  
In the chance wild flower  
We may find on the pathway side, or the glinting flint,  
Or other things so small and unregarded:  
Descry far windows fired with the sun, to whom

Nothing is small or mean.  
To us, let the war be a leering ghost now shriven,  
And as though it had never been;  
A tragedy mask discarded.  
A lamp in a tomb.  
What though in the hounded east, now we are gone,  
The thunder-throated cannonade boom on?  
Too long we have striven,  
Too soon we return.  
The white stone roads go valleyward from the height,  
Like our hopes, to be lost in haze  
Where the bonfires burn  
With the dross of summer days—  
(Our summer hideous, harvesting affright).  
Ah, see the silver Spirit dream among his quiet dells,  
Hear the slow slumbrous bells,  
The voices of a world long by,  
Come dim and clear and dim  
As the wheat-leys sleep or sigh.  
Fall into musings thence, let Psyche stray  
Where she lists,  
Among small things of little account,  
Or through the coloured mists;—  
Myriad the roads to the visionary mount,  
And the white forehead of the Mystery.  
But alas, she falls in a swoon,  
Pale-lipped like a withering moon;  
So terrible is the insistency  
Of the east where like a fiend automaton  
The thunder-throated cannonade booms on.

*September 1917*

## *The Sighing Time*

THE sighing time, the sighing time! . . .  
The old house mourns and shudders so;  
And the bleak garrets' crevices



Like whirring distaffs utter dread;  
Streams of shadow people go  
By hollow stairs and passages  
In black cloths herding out their dead.  
Along the creaking corridors  
They troop with sighs, grayhead and young,  
They droop their heads in bitter tears.  
The panels yawn like charnel doors  
Where the dark windows ivy-clung  
Are gloating spiders' belvederes.  
Without, like old Laocoon,  
The yewtree claws the serpent gusts,  
The wicket swings with peacock screams.  
Time in the courtyard leans upon  
His pausing scythe, in dim mistrusts  
And sad recalls of summer dreams.  
The garden, cynically sown  
With leaves in death unlovely, bows  
Its tragic plume of pipy stalks:  
Poison-spores have overgrown  
In crazy-coloured death-carouse  
The parterres and the lovers' walks.  
The anguished sun is swiftly set,  
And Hesper's primrose coronal  
Is sullied with distortions pale.  
The grange bell in its minaret  
With dreary three-times-dreary call  
Dingles in the gale.  
The sighing time, the sighing time.

1917

### *Clare's Ghost*

PITCH-DARK night shuts in, and the rising gale  
Is full of the presage of rain,  
And there comes a withered wail  
From the wainscot and jarring pane,

And a long funeral surge  
Like a wood-god's dirge,  
Like the wash of the shoreward tides, from the firs on the crest.

The shaking hedges blacken, the last gold flag  
Lowers from the West;  
The Advent bell moans wild like a witch hag  
In the storm's unrest,  
And the lychgate lantern's candle weaves a shroud,  
And the unlatched gate shrieks loud.

Up fly the smithy sparks, but are baffled from soaring  
By the pelting sturly, and ever  
As puff the bellows, a multitude more outpouring  
Die foiled in the endeavour.

And a stranger stands with me here in the glow  
Chinked through the door, and marks  
The sparks  
Perish in whirlpool wind, and if I go  
To the delta of cypress, where the glebe gate cries,  
I see him there, with his streaming hair  
And his eyes  
Piercing beyond our human firmament,  
Lit with a burning deathless discontent.

1917

## *The Unchangeable*

THOUGH I within these two last years of grace  
Have seen bright Ancre scourged to brackish mire,  
And meagre Belgian becks by dale and chace  
Stamped into sloughs of death with battering fire—  
Spite of all this, I sing you high and low,  
My old loves, Waters, be you shoal or deep,  
Waters whose lazy and continual flow  
Learns at the drizzling weir the tongue of sleep.

For Sussex cries from primrose lags and brakes,  
"Why do you leave my woods untrod so long?  
Still float the bronze carp on my lilled lakes,  
Still the wood-fairies round my spring wells throng;  
And chancing lights on willowy waterbreaks  
Dance to the bubbling brooks of elfin song."

1917

## *Wild Cherry Tree*

~~H~~ERE be rural graces, sylvan places,  
Bright-hearted brooks that chanting fall,  
Leys and fallows, reedy rustling shallows,  
Colours and musics rustical.

O the silvery cherry, the visionary,  
Templed in dewy dim green pleasance  
Where moths flutter bloom-like—who shall utter  
The shining wonder of her presence?

Nor shall midnight veil her, hushed moon fail her,  
Nor lack true lover then shall she;  
Breathed from sleeping orchards afar shall come creeping  
A long long sigh to the darling tree.

1918

## *A Vignette*

BRONZE noonlight domes the dim blue gloom  
Where many-antlered oaks immure  
A hush, a cool—the "cynosure  
Of neighbouring eyes," that tired with bloom  
And blaze of popped yellowing swath,  
And jewelled meadows' pomp and state,  
Delight to spy the glimmering gate  
Far down the oakwood's bridle-path.

## *A Country God*

WHEN groping farms are lanterned up  
And stolchy ploughlands hid in grief,  
And glimmering byroads catch the drop  
That weeps from sprawling twig and leaf,  
And heavy-hearted spins the wind  
Among the tattered flags of Mirth,—  
Then who but I flit to and fro,  
With shuddering speech, with mope and mow,  
And glass the eyes of Earth?

Then haunt I by some moanish brook  
Where lank and snaky brambles swim,  
Or where the hill pines swartly look  
I whirry through the dark and hymn  
A dull-voiced dirge and threnody,  
An echo of the world's sad drone  
That now appals the friendly stars—  
O wail for blind brave youth whose wars  
Turn happiness to stone.

How rang the cavern-shades of old  
To my melodious pipes, and then  
My bright-haired bergamask patrolled  
Each lawn and plot for laughter's din:  
Never a sower flung broad cast,  
No hedger brished nor scythesman swung,  
Nor maiden trod the purpling press  
But I was by to guard and bless  
And for their solace sung.

But now the sower's hand is writhed  
In livid death, the bright rhythm stolen,  
The gold grain flatted and unscythed,  
The boars in the vineyard gnarled and sullen

Havocking the grapes; and the pouncing wind  
Spins the spattered leaves of the glen  
In a mockery dance, death's hue-and-cry;  
With all my murmurous pipes flung by  
And summer not to come again.

1918

*THE ENGLISH SCENE*



## *Leisure*

LISTEN, and lose not the sweet luring cry,  
Nor let the far-off torches gleam in vain;  
The moments are so few, so soon slipt by,  
And yet so rare to lull the harried brain.  
For now is autumn fully come, and steals  
In a king's daydream over weald and wold,  
And the last honey is scoured, the last sheaf housed;  
And the boon earth reveals,  
With the melodious drone of plenty drowzed,  
Leisure and loving-kindness manifold.

Then when the early primroses of day  
Bud through the cool mist, fail O fail not then  
To scan the sign of beauty, nor betray  
The soul's first love that might not flower again.  
And calm and marvellous the wide lands lie  
Dim with awakening-notes of little birds;  
And the delighted Spirit in the dells  
Wooes the sun's opening eye  
With his droll night-whims, puff balls' pepper-gourds,  
Startling white mushrooms and bronze chantarelles.

Gentle and dewy-bright the landscape fills  
Through the serene and crystal atmosphere;  
Night's blackamoors sink into reedy ghylls  
To skulk unsunned till eve's pale lantern peer;  
And silver elvish gossamers go dance  
On twinkling voyages at the caprice  
Of autumn half-asleep and idly playing  
With fancies as they chance,  
The feather's fall, the doomed red leaf delaying,  
And all the tiny circumstance of peace.

Along the purpled bramble-brake he treads  
The giant sauntering like a peasant boy,  
Murmuring a song, brushing through russet beds



Of sunburned bracken with "Hi-gee" and "Whoi";  
Forgetting all the tumult and the toil  
Of harvest, for the vale farms all are still,  
Save thatchers on the yellow ricks, or where  
Smoke's light blue pennants coil  
From white-coned oasts, or bonfires fume and flare,  
Or flagging breezes twirl the black-vanned mill.

Now the old hedger with his half-moon-hook,  
Plashing the spiked thorn, musing of bygone men,  
Shakes the crab apples plopping in the brook  
Till jangling wildgeese flush from the drowned fen.  
Nodding he plods in his gray revery,  
Self-sorry robins humouring his thought's cast;  
While scarce perceived, by red walls warm with peaches,  
By bosque and signal-tree,  
And otters'-lodges on the river-reaches,  
The feather-footed moments tiptoe past.

Tranquilly beats the country's heart to-day,—  
Golden-age-beckonings, lost pastoral things,  
Fantastically near and far-away,  
Stretch in the sunny calm their blazoned wings.  
Then tarry, tiptoe moments, nor too soon  
Let death beat down your saffron butterflies  
Nor crush your gleaming autumn crocuses,  
But in a gradual swoon  
Let long dreams flaunt till eve accomplishes  
And round the down the tide-mist multiplies.

Tomorrow's brindled shouting storms will flood  
The purblind hollows with a leaden rain  
And flat the gleanings-fields to choking mud  
And writhe the groaning woods with bursts of pain.  
What though that wrath relent ere night? the hills,  
Lonely in sharp light from horizons cold,  
Shall sadden, and the vapour-piercing spires,  
Where the last sunlight thrills,

Jewelling the ghostwhite city with wistful fires,  
Bring tears like spent delights and tales long told.

Tomorrow—but to-day, to-day is young.  
Still nods the sunflower, still the church owls prey,  
Nor yet has sparrow chirped nor cockerel flung  
From cobwebbed rafters his third roundelay  
Which is the very music of the morn.  
Those hours of peaceful witchcraft are to come;  
Wander we lovingly and gather store  
Of balms for griefs unborn:  
Lest the far fairy eyes appeal no more,  
And mercy's music be for ever dumb.

1919

## *Wilderness*

ON lonely Kinton Green all day  
The half-blind tottering plough-horse grieves,  
Dim chimes and crowings far away  
Come drifting down the wind like leaves;  
And there the wood's a coloured mist,  
So close the blackthorns intertwist,—

The blackthorns hung with clinging sloes  
Blue-veiled to weather coming cold,  
And ruby-tasselled shepherd's-rose  
Where flock the finches plumed with gold,  
And swarming brambles laden still  
Though boys and wasps have ate their fill.

Here shining out on lubber boughs  
The lantern crabs pierce gold with light  
The smoke that mouldering leaves unhouse,  
Like stars in frost as spear-point-bright:  
And here the blackbird deign to choose  
His blood-red haws by ones and twos.

Cob-spider runs his glistening maze  
To murder doddering hungry flies,  
Curt echo mocks the mocking jays,  
The partridge in the stubble cries;  
And Hob and Nob unpausing pass  
Down to the Bull for pipe and glass.

1919

## *Changing Moon*

THE green East hagged with prowling storm,  
The troubled rising radiance there,  
The wheatland ripe and warm,  
And rainy voices wandering the dull air.

The church tower standing in the stars  
Drones to pale stones the hour fulfilled;  
In shadowed triumph jars  
The fern-owl in his clustered copse; where spilled

From splintered hatch to swirling bay,  
Then fluttering past scrawled shingle and shells,  
The wild brook trolls away  
To mirror moonlight in the heathery dells.

By ivied palings whispering frets  
The palsied dust, the drouthy green,  
And on the parapets  
Of the fen-bridge the startled ploughboys lean

To hear the moon-mad gipsy rave  
In meadows by the stricken mill,  
Where with the browsing thaive  
She lays her down in the dewed grass; and shrill

Laughs out as she and the sick moon stare  
Through flour-choked windows and can spy

The grudging ghost's despair,  
And where his useless gold and silver lie.

## *The Waggoner*

THE old waggon drudges through the miry lane,  
By the skulking pond where the pollards frown,  
Notched dumb surly images of pain;  
On a dulled earth the night droops down.

Wincing to slow and wistful airs  
The leaves on the shrubbed oaks know their hour,  
And the unknown wandering spoiler bares  
The thorned black hedge of a mournful shower.

Small bodies fluster in the dead brown wrack  
As the stumbling shaft-horse jingles past  
And the waggoner flicks his whip a crack;  
The odd light flares on shadows vast

Over the lodges and oasts and byres  
Of the darkened farm; the moment hangs wan  
As though nature flagged and all desires.  
But in the dim court the ghost is gone

From the hüg-secret yew to the penthouse wall  
And stooping there seems to listen to  
The waggoner leading the gray to stall,  
As centuries past itself would do.

1919

## *Malefactors*

NAILED to these green laths long ago,  
You cramp and shrivel into dross,  
Blotched with mildews, gnawed with moss,  
And now the eye can scarcely know

Where every sprig with rich red harvest nods.

He marks the skies' intents,  
And like a child, his joy still springing new,  
In this fantastic garden the year through  
He steeps himself in nature's opulence.

Mellow between the leafy maze smiles down  
September's sun, swelling his multitude  
Of gold and red and green and russet-brown  
Lavished in plenty's lusty-handed mood

For this old man who goes  
Reckoning ripeness, shoring the lolling sprays,  
And fruits which early gusts made castaways—  
From the deep grasses thriftily rescuing those.

Babble he will, lingeringly, lovingly,  
Of all the glories of this fruitful place,  
Counting the virtues of each several tree,  
Her years, her yield, her hardihood or grace;  
While through this triumph-song,  
As through their shielding leaves, the year's fruits burn  
In bright eye-cozening colour, turn by turn,  
From cool black cherries till gold quinces throng

Blossoming the blue mists with their queenly scent.  
Who hearing him can think what dragging years  
Of drouthy raids and frontier-fights he spent,  
With drum and fife to drown his clamouring fears?

Here where the grapes turn red  
On the red walls, and honey in the hives  
Is like drift snow, contentment only thrives,  
And the long misery of the Line is dead.

Resting in his old oaken-raftered room,  
He sits and watches the departing light  
Crimsoning like his apple-trees in bloom,  
With dreaming gratitude and calm delight.  
And fast the peering sun

Has lit the blue delft ranged along the wall,  
The painted clock and Squirrel's Funeral,  
And through the cobwebs traced his rusty gun.

And then the dusk, and sleep, and while he sleeps,  
Apple-scent floods and honey's fragrance there,  
And old-time wines, whose secret he still keeps,  
Are beautiful upon the marvelling air.

And if sleep seem unsound,  
And set old bugles pealing through the dark,  
Waked on the instant, he but wakes to hark  
His bellman cockerel crying the first round.

1919

### *Almswomen*

AT Quincey's moat the squandering village ends,  
And there in the almshouse dwell the dearest friends  
Of all the village, two old dames that cling  
As close as any true loves in the spring.  
Long, long ago they passed three-score-and-ten,  
And in this doll's-house lived together then;  
All things they have in common being so poor,  
And their one fear, Death's shadow at the door.  
Each sundown makes them mournful, each sunrise  
Brings back the brightness in their failing eyes.

How happy go the rich fair-weather days  
When on the roadside folk stare in amaze  
At such a honeycomb of fruit and flowers  
As melloes round their threshold; what long hours  
They gloat upon their steeping hollyhocks,  
Bee's balsams, feathery southernwood and stocks,  
Fiery dragon's-mouths, great mallow leaves  
For salves, and lemon-plants in bushy sheaves,  
Shagged Esau's-hands with five green finger-tips.  
Such old sweet names are ever on their lips.

As pleased as little children where these grow  
In cobbled pattens and worn gowns they go,  
Proud of their wisdom when on gooseberry shoots  
They stuck egg shells to fright from coming fruits  
The brisk-billed rascals; scanning still to see  
Their neighbour owls saunter from tree to tree,  
Or in the hushing half-light mouse the lane  
Long-winged and lordly.

But when those hours wane  
Indoors they ponder, scared by the harsh storm  
Whose pelting saracens on the window swarm,  
And listen for the mail to clatter past  
And church clock's deep bay withering on the blast;  
They feed the fire that flings its freakish light  
On pictured kings and queens grotesquely bright,  
Platters and pitchers, faded calendars  
And graceful hourglass trim with lavenders.

Many a time they kiss and cry and pray  
That both be summoned in the selfsame day,  
And wiseman linnet tinkling in his cage  
End too with them the friendship of old age,  
And all together leave their treasured room  
Some bell-like evening when the May's in bloom.

1920

## *A Waterpiece*

THE wild-rose bush lets loll  
Her sweet-breathed petals on the pool,  
The bream-pool overshadowed with the cool  
Of oaks where myriad mumbling wings patrol.

There the live dimness burrs with droning glees  
Of hobby-horses with their starting eyes  
And violet humble-bees and dizzy flies;  
That from the dewsprings drink the honeyed lees.

Up the slow stream the immemorial bream  
(For when had Death dominion over them?)  
Through green pavilions of ghost leaf and stem,  
A conclave of blue shadows in a dream,  
Glide on; idola that forgotten plan,  
Incomparably wise, the doom of man.

1919

## *The Pike*

FROM shadows of rich oaks outpeer  
The moss-green bastions of the weir,  
Where the quick dipper forages  
In elver-peopled crevices.  
And a small runlet trickling down the sluice  
Gossamer music tires not to unloose.

Else round the broad pool's hush  
Nothing stirs.  
Unless sometime a straggling heifer crush  
Through the thronged spinny whence the pheasant whirs;  
Or martins in a flash  
Come with wild mirth to dip their magical wings,  
While in the shallow some doomed bulrush swings  
At whose hid root the diver vole's teeth gnash.

And nigh this toppling reed, still as the dead  
The great pike lies, the murderous patriarch,  
Watching the waterpit shelving and dark  
Where through the splash his lithe bright vassals thread.

The rose-finned roach and bluish bream  
And staring ruffe steal up the stream  
Hard by their glutton tyrant, now  
Still as a sunken bough.



He on the sandbank lies,  
Sunning himself long hours  
With stony gorgon eyes:  
Westward the hot sun lowers.

Sudden the gray pike changes, and quivering poises for  
slaughter;  
Intense terror wakens around him, the shoals scud awry, but  
there chances  
A chub unsuspecting; the prowling fins quicken, in fury he  
lances;  
And the miller that opens the hatch stands amazed at the whirl  
in the water.

1919

### *Perch Fishing*

ON the far hill the cloud of thunder grew  
And sunlight blurred below: but sultry blue  
Burned yet on the valley water where it hoards  
Behind the miller's elmen floodgate boards,  
And there the wasps, that lodge them ill-concealed  
In the vole's empty house, still drove afield  
To plunder touchwood from old elvish trees  
And build their young ones their hutched nurseries;  
Still creaked the grasshoppers' rasping unison  
Nor had the whisper through the bennets run  
Nor weather-wisest bird gone home.

How then  
Should wry eels in the pebbled shallows ken  
Lightning coming? troubled up they stole  
To the deep-shadowed sullen waterhole,  
Among whose warty snags the quaint perch lair.

As cunning stole the boy to angle there,  
Muffling least tread, with no noise balancing through  
The hangdog alder-boughs his bright bamboo.  
Down plumbed the shuttled ledger, and the quill  
On the quicksilver water lay dead still.

A sharp snatch, swirling to-fro of the line,  
He's lost, he's won, with splash and scuffling shine  
Past the low-lapping brandy-flowers drawn in,  
The ogling hunchback perch with needled fin.  
And there beside him one as large as he,  
Following his hooked mate careless who shall see  
Or what befall him, close and closer yet,—  
The startled boy might take him in his net  
That folds the other.

Slow, while on the clay  
The other flounces, slow he sinks away.

What agony usurps that watery brain  
For comradeship of twenty summers slain,  
For such delights below the flashing weir  
And up the sluice-cut, playing buccaneer  
Among the minnows; lolling in hot sun  
When bathing vagabonds had drest and done;  
Rootling in salty river-moss for meal  
And straying greaves, when hushed the trundling wheel;  
Snapping the dapping moth, and with new wonder  
Prowling through old drowned barges falling asunder.  
And still a thousand things the whole year through  
They did together, never more to do.

1919

## *Shepherd*

EVENING has brought the glow-worm to the green,  
And early stars to heaven, and joy to men;  
The sun is gone, the shepherd leaves the pen  
And hobbles home, while we for leisure lean  
On garden pales. O shepherd old and kind,  
Sweet may your musings and your slumbers prove!—  
Where the rude chairs, of untanned osiers wove,  
Creak to the dead of night, his rest he'll find:  
And at his feet well pleased his dog will doze,  
And not a traveller passes but he knows.

A country god to every childish eye—  
Who sees the shepherd save when he comes home,  
With untrimmed staff, smock stitched like honeycomb,  
With great-tongued boots, and buskins to the thigh?  
A seer, a country god—so thought conceives  
His oracles of seasons foul or fair,  
His weather-bitten looks, the wild white hair  
That on his shoulders thatches like an eaves:  
And he himself, proud of his antique toil,  
Gossips with none that might such honour soil.

Sleep comes upon the village, the rich bee  
From honeyed bells of balsams high is gone;  
The windows palely shine; the owls whoop on,  
But bats have slunk into their hollow tree.  
The shepherd hours before has closed his eyes,  
But he unseen will take his staff in hand  
And walk to wake the morning through the land  
Before the cockerel counts it time to rise.  
High on the hill he dares the mist and dew  
And sings before a sunbeam ventures through.

Now when the morning ripens and unfolds  
Like beds of flowers the glories of the plain,  
His heart leaps up at every steeple vane  
And barn and kiln and windmill on the wolds;  
For boyhood knew them all, and not a brook  
But he has bathed and played the miller there;  
By every green he's hurried to the fair  
And tended sheep in every whitethorn nook.  
Thus dreaming does he hurdle up the pen  
And thinks how soon comes clipping-time agen.

His sheep his children are, each one he knows,  
And well might know, who lay through winter storm  
In cramping hulks with bracken scarce kept warm  
While each one came from the poor frightened yoes.  
He never bids or wants for holiday,

His sheep his children are and his delight:  
That shepherds'-harvest makes the May so bright  
When round his feet the lambs so frisk and play  
And nuzzle in his sleeve and twitch his hand—  
The prettiest dears, he calls them, in the land.

But May when music grows on every tree  
Too quickly passes, shepherd's-roses die—  
New dipt and shorn, they still delight the eye:  
How fast they gather to his "Cub-burree"!  
Even crows and jackdaws scrambling for the beans  
Among the troughs are of his rustic clan,  
Confess him king of bird and sheep and man;  
And where he breaks his bread the emmet gleans.  
The sun gives him old wisdom, the wind sings  
Clear to his sense, his heart many hard things.

The stubble browsing comes, and from the grave  
Autumn in half-hue swathes the rolling weald,  
The blue smoke curls with mocking stealth afield,  
And far-off lights, like wild eyes in a cave,  
Stare at the shepherd on the bleaching grounds.  
Deeply he broods on the dark tide of change,  
And starts when echo sharp and sly and strange  
To his gap-stopping from the sear wood sounds.  
His very sheep-bells seem to bode him ill  
And starling-whirlwinds strike his bosom chill.

Then whispering all his eighty years draw nigh,  
And mutter like an Advent wind, and grieve  
At perished summer, bidding him take leave  
Of labour, take some comfort ere he die.  
The hounded leaf has found a tongue to warn  
How fierce the fang of winter, the lead rain  
Brings him old pictures of the drowning plain,  
When even his dog sulks loath to face the morn.  
The sun drops cold in a watery cloud, the briars  
Like starved arms still snatch at his withered fires.

But shepherd goes to warm him in his chair,  
While in the blaze his dog growls at his dreams,  
And on the hearth the leaping firelight gleams  
That makes him think of one with ruddy hair  
Who kept the sheep in ancient Bethlehem.  
With trusting tears he takes his Bible, reads  
Once more of still green banks and glittering meads  
Where storms grow not, nor ever floods to stem;  
Where the kind shepherd never takes them wrong,  
And gently leads the yoes that are with young.

### *Forefathers*

HERE they went with smock and crook,  
Toiled in the sun, lolled in the shade,  
Here they mudded out the brook  
And here their hatchet cleared the glade:  
Harvest-supper woke their wit,  
Huntsman's moon their wooings lit.

From this church they led their brides,  
From this church themselves were led  
Shoulder-high; on these waysides  
Sat to take their beer and bread.  
Names are gone—what men they were  
These their cottages declare.

Names are vanished, save the few  
In the old brown Bible scrawled;  
These were men of pith and thew,  
Whom the city never called;  
Scarce could read or hold a quill,  
Built the barn, the forge, the mill.

On the green they watched their sons  
Playing till too dark to see,

As their fathers watched them once,  
As my father once watched me;  
While the bat and beetle flew  
On the warm air webbed with dew.

Unrecorded, unrenowned,  
Men from whom my ways begin,  
Here I know you by your ground  
But I know you not within—  
There is silence, there survives  
Not a moment of your lives.

Like the bee that now is blown  
Honey-heavy on my hand,  
From his toppling tansy-throne  
In the green tempestuous land—  
I'm in clover now, nor know  
Who made honey long ago.

## *The Idlers*

THE gipsies lit their fires by the chalk-pit gate anew,  
And the hopped horses supped in the further dusk and dew;  
The gnats flocked round the smoke like idlers as they were  
And through the goss and bushes the owls began to churr.

An ell above the woods the last of sunset glowed  
With a dusky gold that filled the pond beside the road;  
The cricketers had done, the leas all silent lay,  
And the carrier's clattering wheels went past and died away.

The gipsies lolled and gossiped, and ate their stolen swedes,  
Made merry with mouth-organs, worked toys with piths of reeds:  
The old wives puffed their pipes, nigh as black as their hair,  
And not one of them all seemed to know the name of care.

## *The March Bee*

A WARNING wind finds out my resting-place  
And in a mountain cloud the lost sun chills;  
Night comes; and yet before she shows her face  
The sun flings off the shadows, warm light fills  
The valley and the clearings on the hills.  
Bleak crow the moorcocks on the fen's blue splashes,  
But here I warm myself with these bright looks and flashes.

And warmed like me the merry humble-bee  
Puts fear aside, runs forth to catch the sun,  
And by the ploughland's shoulder comes to see  
The flowers that like him best, and seems to shun  
Cold countless quaking wind-flowers every one,  
Primroses too; but makes poor grass his choice  
Where small wood-strawberry blossoms nestle and rejoice.

The magpies steering round from wood to wood,  
Tree-creeper flickering up the elm's green rind,  
Bold gnats that revel round my solitude  
And most this pleasant bee intent to find  
The new-born joy, inveigle the rich mind  
Long after darkness comes cold-lipped to one  
Still listening to the bee, still basking in the sun.

## *Gleaning*

ALONG the baulk the grasses drenched in dews  
Soak through the morning gleaners' clumsy shoes,  
And cloying cobwebs trammel their brown cheeks  
While from the shouldering sun the dewfog reeks.  
Now soon begun, on ground where yesterday  
The rakers' warning-sheaf forbade their way,  
Hard clacking dames in great white hoods make haste  
To cram their lapbags with the barley waste,

Scrambling as if a thousand were but one,  
Careless of stabbing thistles. Now the sun  
Gulps up the dew and dries the stubs, and scores  
Of tiny people trundle out of doors  
Among the stiff stalks, where the scratched hands ply—  
Red ants and blackamoors and such as fly;  
Tunbellied, too, with legs a finger long,  
The spider harvestman; the churlish strong  
Black scorpion, prickled earwig, and that mite  
Who shuts up like a leaden shot in fright  
And lies for dead. And still before the rout  
The young rats and the fieldmice whisk about  
And from the trod whisp out the leveret darts,  
Bawled at by boys that pass with blundering carts  
Top-heavy to the red-tiled barns.—And still  
The children feed their corn-sacks with good will,  
And farmwives ever faster stoop and flounce.  
The hawk drops down a plummet's speed to pounce  
The nibbling mouse or resting lark away,  
The lost mole tries to pierce the matted clay  
In agony and terror of the sun.

The dinner hour and its grudging leisure won,  
All sit below the pollards on the dykes,  
Rasped with the twinge of creeping barley spikes.  
Sweet beyond telling now the small beer goes  
From the hooped hardwood bottles, the wasp knows,  
And even hornets whizz from the eaten ash;  
Then crusts are dropt and switches snatched to slash,  
While safe in shadow of the apron thrown  
Aside the bush which years before was grown  
To snap the poacher's nets, the baby sleeps.

Now toil returns, in red-hot fluttering light,  
And far afield the weary rabble creeps,  
Oft happening blind wheat, black among the white,  
That smutches where it touches quick as soot;—  
Oft gaping where the landrail seems afoot,



Who with such magic throws his baffling speech  
Far off he sounds when scarce beyond arm's reach.  
The dogs are left to mind the morning's gain,  
But squinting knaves can slouch to steal the grain.  
Close to the farm the fields are gleaned agen,  
Where the boy droves the turkey and white hen  
To pick the shelled sweet corn, their hue and cry  
Answers the gleaners' gabble; and sows trudge by  
With little pigs to play and rootle there,  
And all the fields are full of din and blare.

So steals the time past, so they glean and gloat;  
The hobby-horse whirs round, the moth's dust coat  
Blends with the stubble, scarlet soldiers fly  
In airy pleasure; but the gleaners' eye  
Sees little but their spoils, or robin-flower  
Ever on tenterhooks to shun the shower,—  
Their weather-prophet never known astray;  
When he folds up, then towards the hedge glean they.  
But now the dragon of the skies droops, pales,  
And wandering in the wet grey western vales  
Stumbles, and passes, and the gleaning's done.  
The farmer with fat hares slung on his gun  
Gives folks goodnight, as down the ruts they pull  
The creaking two-wheeled handcarts bursting full,  
And whimpering children cease their teasing squawls  
While left alone the supping partridge calls—  
Till all at home is stacked from mischief's way,  
To thrash and dress the first wild windy day;  
And each good wife crowns weariness with pride,  
With such small winnings more than satisfied.

### *The Pasture Pond*

By the pasture pond alone  
I'll call the landscape all my own,  
Be the lord of all I see

From water-fly to topmost tree,  
And on these riches gloat this day  
Till the blue mist warns away.

Here's no malice that could wither  
Joy's blown flower, nor dare come hither;  
No hot hurry such as drives  
Men through their unsolaced lives;  
Here like bees I cannot fare  
A span but find some honey there.

The small birds and great as well  
In these trees and closes dwell,  
No cause found to grudge or brawl,  
For nature gives enough for all;  
Crows don't care what starling delves  
Among these mole-heaps like themselves.

You thrush that haunt the mellow ground  
And run with those quick glances round,  
You'll run and revel through my brain  
For a blue moon befooling pain;  
You elms so full of birds and song,  
Wear green coats there the winter long.

From the meadows smooth and still,  
Where the peewits feed their fill  
And into swirling rings upfly  
With white breasts dazzling on the eye,  
To the pool itself I come  
And like rapture am struck dumb:

For if fields and air are free  
The water's double liberty,  
Where milch cows dewlap-deep may wade  
Or hernshaw ply his angling trade—  
Else what but vision dares intrude  
That many-peopled solitude?

The astonished clouds seem lingering here  
For dragon-flies so whip and veer  
And take the sun and turn to flame,  
They'd make the fastest cloud seem lame,  
Or breaths of wind that sometimes fly  
And cut faint furrows and are by.

So well may I admire the pool  
Where thistles with their caps of wool  
(Whence those sly winds some flecks purloin)  
Stand sentinels at every coign,  
And sorrels rusty-red have banned  
Each place the thistles left unmanned.

But passing through, an old ally,  
Into the bright deeps I may spy,  
Where merry youngers, roach or rudd,  
Jump for the fly and flounce and scud;  
That care for no one now, and live  
For every pleasure pools can give.

In russet weeds, by the sunken boat,  
That spare each other room to float,  
They hide along, grown fine and fat;  
I hear them like a lapping cat  
Feed from the stems till hunger's done—  
Then out afresh to find the sun.

The moorhen, too, as proud as they,  
With jerking neck is making way  
In horse-shoe creeks where old pike rest  
And beetles skate in jostling jest;  
And overhead as large as wrens  
Dance hobby-horses of the fens—

From all these happy folk I find  
Life's radiance kindle in my mind,  
And even when homeward last I turn  
How bright the hawthorn berries burn,

How steady in the old elm still  
The great woodpecker strikes his bill;

Whose labour oft in vain is given,  
Yet never he upbraids high heaven;  
Such trust is his. O I have heard  
No sweeter from a singing bird  
Than his tap-tapping there this day,  
That said what words will never say.

But bells from humble steeples call,  
Nor will I be the last of all  
To pass between the ringers strong  
And as of old make evensong;  
While over pond and plat and hall  
The first of sleep begins to fall.

*Time, like an ever-rolling stream!*  
Through the yew the sun's last gleam  
Lights into a glory extreme  
The squirrel-carven pews that dream  
Of my fathers far beyond  
Their solitary pasture-pond.

## *November Morning*

FROM the night storm sad wakes the winter day  
With sobbings round the yew, and far-off surge  
Of broadcast rain; the old house cries dismay,  
And rising floods gleam silver on the verge  
Of sackclothed skies and cold unfruited grounds.  
On the black hop-pole beats the weazen bine,  
The rooks with terror's tumult take their rounds,  
Under the eaves the chattering sparrows pine.

Waked by the bald light from his bed of straw,  
The beggar shudders out to steal and gnaw

Sheep's locusts: leaves the last of many homes—  
Where mouldered apples and black shoddy lie,  
Hop-shovels spluttered, wickered flasks flung by,  
And sharded pots and rusty curry-combs.

### *The Dried Millpond*

OLD Broadbridge Pond, once on a time so deep,  
And full of water-lilies as could be,  
Is mudded now, in dull and deathly sleep;  
A gaping slough; a piteous injury.

Hoarse brawling through some deep-wormed charnels run  
Small streams dull as dead serpents in the sun,  
Roots writhed and sloven mottle everywhere  
And even the mid pool has no secret lair,  
And what seemed danger's very gateways lie  
Grey quagmire where the greedy moorhens ply.

Not even eels could work to come agen.  
Poor roach and perch have perished, whose swift sides  
Made beautiful the bright green kingdom then,  
Nor any pleasure of the past abides.

### *Spring Night*

THROUGH the smothered air the wicker finds  
A muttering voice, "crick" cries the embered ash,  
Sharp rains knap at the panes beyond the blinds,  
The flues and eaves moan, the jarred windows clash;  
And like a sea breaking its barriers, flooding  
New green abysses with untold uproar,  
The cataract nightwind whelms the time of budding,  
Swooping in sightless fury off the moor  
Into our valley. Not a star shines. Who

Would guess the martin and the cuckoo come,  
The pear in bloom, the bloom gone from the plum,  
The cowslips countless as a morning dew?  
So mad it blows, so truceless and so grim,  
As if day's host of flowers were a moment's whim.

## *The May Day Garland*

THOUGH folks no more go Maying  
Upon the dancing-green  
With ale and cakes and music loud  
To crown the fairest queen,  
Yet little ones to each gate go  
Before the clock tells noon,  
And there the prettiest garlands show  
That Love can smile upon.

Their garlands are of paigles  
That flaunt their yellow heads  
By dykesides where the pigeon broods  
And the nuzzling hedgehog beds—  
Their ladysmocks shall nod in the sun  
And kingcups scent like mead,  
And blue-bells' misty flame be spun  
With daisies' glittering brede.

And one will make her garland  
A crown for such a day,  
One a harp, and one a heart  
(Lest hers be stolen away);  
Cart-wheels never meant to turn  
And chip-hats never worn  
And petal-tambourines shall earn  
A largess this May morn.

And for these courteous children,  
And Love that's ever a child,

The May should never fade to-night  
    Could Time but be beguiled,  
Could Time but see the beauty of  
    These singing honied hours,  
And lie in the sun adream while we  
    Hid up his scythe in flowers!

## *Journey*

ALONG the relic of an ancient ride  
Where all the summer's weeds, an upstart race,  
The thoroughfare of centuries denied,  
We took our way, nor wished a better place.

There gilded flies and bees buzzed sweet content;  
The path became a glade, a thousand ways  
About the hills and holes the brambles went,  
With first dewberries blue as thunder haze.

Red rosy flowers a thicket swarmed beyond  
Where long ago the faint brook's dropples died,  
And, not to drown us in their blossomed pond,  
Into the pasture's gap we turned aside.

Stern on their knolls the patriarch thistles stood,  
Nid-nodding in assembly passing wise,  
While often urchin winds in antic rude  
Plucked their white beards, puffed them to sink or rise,

Like tufts stolen from the clouds, whose concourse slow  
Darkened awhile or lightened travelling on,  
The darkest turning whiter than new snow  
As through the cliffs the sun a moment shone.

A nameless track, a rabble of outcast weeds,  
And knots of thistle-wool in clownish chase,  
What fare were these to furnish pleasure's needs?  
We laughed at time, nor wished a better place.

## *High Summer*

Now all the birds are flown, the first, the second brood,  
Save those poor nestlings prisoned in cages for good;  
The year seems to droop with its own midsummer might:  
Tarnishing mosses crowd even runnels out of sight.

The ponds so wasted down scarce give their tenants breath,  
Who plunge their heads to the ooze, and sicken to their death  
Unless the clouds come on—already their dead float  
Gleamless among the brambles that hide the moorhen's boat.

Slow walks the farmer's cob with ever-swifching tail  
Where the white dust-track glares; and labour dips his pail  
But slow where the sand-vein still bubbles its clear spring;  
The mat-mender squatting near wearily braids his string,

And curses at the thunder-flies that blacken on his arm  
(As now they irk and terrify the gangers on the farm);  
And thinks once again when he charged across the sand  
In such torment, his reward—a hook for a hand;

And yet he labours on, till one o'clock drones,  
Muttering how the flies make the flesh creep on his bones—  
Then hobbles for his beer, and lively by and by  
Talks forgotten battles with a tear in his eye.

## *Evening Mystery*

Now ragged clouds in the west are heaping,  
All the hedges fall a-weeping,  
And in a thin green distance flowers  
The moon, the anemone of lonely hours.

The moon sheds diamonds on a myriad meadows  
And her rays wander among wood shadows;  
Ere the last of sunset's flown  
She has made a new world of her own.



Old farm-houses with their white faces  
Fly, and their ghosts have taken their places;  
Even the signposts like grim liars  
Point to trapping brakes and briars.

Tired birds roosting are not yet sleeping,  
But stir and mutter at the wild eyes peeping;  
And sheep will not let silence lie,  
But blare about the hilltop sky

As though long-plotting dogs had broken  
From kennel-chains, by the ringleader spoken,  
To harry the ewes in the light of the moon—  
The blood on their jaws will hang 'em anon.

But no, for miles the sheepfolds moan,  
And dogs bay from their farms alone;  
Can she who shines so calm be fear?  
What poison pours she in slumber's ear?

### *Sheet Lightning*

WHEN on the green the rag-tag game had stopt  
And red the lights through alehouse curtains glowed,  
The clambering brake drove out and took the road.  
Then on the stern moors all the babble dropt  
Among our merry men, who felt the dew  
Sweet to the soul and saw the southern blue  
Thronged with heat lightning miles and miles abroad,  
Working and whickering, snakish, winged and clawed,  
Or like old carp lazily rising and shouldering.  
Long the slate cloud flank shook with the death-white  
smouldering:  
Yet not a voice.

The night drooped oven-hot;  
Then where the turnpike pierced the black wood plot,  
Tongues wagged again and each man felt the grim

Destiny of the hour speaking through him,  
And then tales came of dwarfs on Starling Hill  
And those young swimmers drowned at the roller mill,  
Where on the drowsiest noon an undertow  
Famishing for life boiled like a pot below:  
And how two higglers at the Walnut Tree  
Had curst the Lord in thunderstorm and He  
Had struck them dead as soot with lightning then—  
Which left the tankards whole, to take the men.

Many a lad and many a lass was named  
Who once stept bold and proud; but death had tamed  
The revel on the eve of May; cut short  
The primrosing and promise of good sport,  
Shut up the score book, laid the bright scarf by.

Such bodings mustered from the fevered sky;  
But now the spring well through the honeycomb  
Of scored stone rumbling tokened them near home:  
The whip-lash clacked, the jog-trot sharpened, all  
Sang Farmer's Boy as loud as they could bawl,  
And at the Walnut Tree the homeward brake  
Stopt for hoarse ribaldry to brag and slake.

The weary wildfire faded from the dark;  
While this one damned the parson, that the clerk;  
And anger's balefire forked from the unbared blade  
At word of things gone wrong or stakes not paid:  
The waiting driver stooped with oath to find  
A young jack rabbit in the roadway, blind  
Or dazzled by the lamps, as stiff as steel  
With fear. Joe beat its brain out on the wheel.

### *Will o' the Wisp*

FROM choked morass I leap and run  
As free as heaven's stars or sun,  
And when the fisher gets him home  
About his lair I nimbly roam,

Unthreatened by his envious eye  
That wishes water-folk to die,  
And then like darting dace I go  
Soaring, swerving, high and low.

The wind though scarce a ghostly stir  
Bears my small torch, that some aver  
Is but a vapour's fevered sheen  
Or lanterned fly like him in green  
Whose light now glistens on the road  
As mewling cat-owls wheel abroad;  
But those who've seen me, make reply  
"Nor marish-breath nor lanterned fly."

And this my holiday I will take  
Though churls and fools rush in my wake  
And like a thistle's down would seize  
A God that takes his evening ease!  
So Hodge and Ha'pence lured askance  
See me past further sagbeds dance,  
And squashing where the black streams crawl  
Are left with working mire to brawl.

On ashy clouds if I've a mind  
I hover over human kind  
And fling my summer lightnings till  
The heartiest drunkard's tongue is still;  
I, with the bright-haired comets kin,  
Baited for a harlequin,  
I, spirit fire that none can quell,  
Content in swamps despised to dwell!

### *Cloudy June*

ABOVE the hedge the spearman thistle towers  
And thinks himself the god of all he sees;  
But nettles jostle fearless where he glowers,  
Like old and stained and sullen tapestries;

And elbowing hemlocks almost turn to trees,  
Proud as the sweetbriar with her bubble flowers,  
Where puffed green spider cowers  
To trap the toiling bees.

Here joy shall muse what melancholy tells,  
And melancholy smile because of joy,  
Whether the poppy breathe arabian spells  
To make them friends, or whistling gipsy-boy  
Sound them a truce that nothing comes to cloy.  
No sunray burns through this slow cloud, nor swells  
Noise save the browsing-bells,  
Half sorrow and half joy.

Night comes; from fens where blind grey castles frown  
A veiled moon ventures on the cavernous sky.  
No stir, no tassel-tremble on the down:  
Mood dims to nothing: atom-like I lie  
Where nightjars burr and barking fox steps by  
And hedgehogs talk and play in glimmering brown;  
Passions in such night drown,  
Nor tell me I am I.

## *Mole Catcher*

WITH coat like any mole's, as soft and black,  
And hazel bows bundled beneath his arm,  
With long-helved spade and rush bag on his back,  
The trapper plods alone about the farm:  
And spies new mounds in the ripe pasture-land,  
And where the lob-worms writhe up in alarm  
And easy sinks the spade, he takes his stand  
Knowing the moles' dark highroad runs below:  
Then sharp and square he chops the turf, and day  
Gloats on the opened turnpike through the clay.

Out from his wallet hurry pin and prong,  
And trap, and noose to tie it to the bow;  
And then his grand arcanum, oily and strong,  
Found out by his forefather years ago  
To scent the peg and witch the moles along.  
The bow is earthed and arched ready to shoot  
And snatch the death-knot fast round the first mole  
Who comes and snuffs well pleased and tries to root  
Past the sly nose peg; back again is put  
The mould, and death left smirking in the hole.  
The old man goes and tallies all his snares  
And finds the prisoners there and takes his toll.

And moles to him are only moles; but hares  
See him afield and scarcely cease to nip  
Their dinners, for he harms not them; he spares  
The drowning fly that of his ale would sip  
And throws the ant the crumbs of comradeship.  
And every time he comes into his yard  
Grey linnet knows he brings the groundsel sheaf,  
And clatters round the cage to be unbarred,  
And on his finger whistles twice as hard.—  
What his old vicar says, is his belief,  
In the side pew he sits and hears the truth;  
And never misses once to ring his bell  
On Sundays night and morn, nor once since youth  
Has heard the chimes afield, but has heard tell  
There's not a peal in England sounds so well.

### *Water Sport*

"COME all who hear our song" say Yalding bells,  
And dim "We bid you come" ring Hunton's four;  
Then, "Come, come, come," the dingling treble tells,  
And still the echo rings a moment more.  
The sunny music travelling out like bees  
Was pleasant on the water's wide blue glade,

Where Cheveney mill peers through the poplar trees—  
Sweet fell the summons there, but none obeyed.

Loosed from the harness of the grumbling mill,  
Hungry for play, peal churchbells as they will,  
The mill boy and his boon companions urge  
Their crazy boat out from the bubbling verge;  
And up the broad flood, gabbling as they row,  
They venture proud as Vikings long ago;  
Where the red butterfly with sleights and whims  
Mocks the stretched hand, and where the swallow skims  
To gild his wing with floss of twinkling dew.  
And in the hawthorn whence the young thrush flew  
The chuff vole feeds, a very alderman,  
Though scared below that old leviathan  
The pike shoots into surer solitude.

Pleasure is there in that old boat and rude,  
And will be there, as long as the green planks  
Hold each to each: as long as Sunday pranks  
Startle the redhead moorhen into shelter  
Or on the sleeping hatch the black weeds swelter.  
Glorious will be the long adventurous day,  
And sweet will vespers be, to hush their play,  
When the slow ripples from the home course run  
For seeming miles on miles to the dying Sun,  
The dying Sun that even through the black  
Sharp-jutting mill will burn with intense light;  
Joy will fall deeper with the dews of night  
And the new moon marred with no wraith or wrack  
Shine like an angel to the mill boy's sight.

### *The Scythe Struck by Lightning*

A THICK hot haze had choked the valley grounds  
Long since, the dogday sun had gone his rounds  
Like a dull coal half lit with sulky heat;

And leas were iron, ponds were clay, fierce beat  
The blackening flies round moody cattle's eyes.  
Wasps on the mudbanks seemed a hornet's size  
That on the dead roach battered. The plough's increase  
Stood under a curse.

Behold, the far release!  
Old wisdom breathless at her cottage door  
"Sounds of abundance" mused, hearing the roar  
Of marshalled armies in the silent air,  
And thought Elisha stood beside her there,  
And loudly forecast ere the next nightfall  
She'd turn the looking-glasses to the wall.

Faster than armies out of the burnt void  
The hourglass clouds innumerably deployed,  
And when the hay-folks next look up, the sky  
Sags black above them; scarce is time to fly.  
And most run for their cottages; but Ward,  
The mower, for the inn beside the ford,  
And slow strides he with shouldered scythe still bare,  
While to the coverts leaps the great-eyed hare.

As he came in the dust snatched up and whirled  
Hung high, and like a bell-rope whipped and twirled;  
The brazen light glared round, the haze resolved  
Into demoniac shapes bulged and convolved.  
Well might poor ewes afar make bleatings wild,  
Though this old trusting mower sat and smiled;  
For from the hush of many days the land  
Had waked itself: and now on every hand  
Shrill swift alarm-notes, cries and counter-cries,  
Lowings and crowings came and throbbing sighs.  
Now atom lightning brandished on the moor,  
Then out of sullen drumming came the roar  
Of thunder joining battle east and west:  
In hedge and orchard small birds durst not rest,  
Flittering like dead leaves and like wisps of straws,

And the cuckoo called again, for without pause  
Oncoming voices in the vortex burred.  
The storm came toppling like a wave, and blurred  
In grey the trees that like black steeples towered.  
The sun's last yellow died. Then who but cowered?  
Down ruddy darkness floods the hideous flash,  
And pole to pole the cataract whirlwinds clash.

Alone within the tavern parlour still  
Sat the grey mower, pondering Nature's will,  
And flinching not to flame or bolt, that swooped  
With a great hissing rain till terror drooped  
In weariness: and then there came a roar  
Ten-thousand-fold, he saw not, was no more—  
But life bursts on him once again, and blood  
Beats droning round, and light comes in a flood.

He stares and sees the sashes battered awry,  
The wainscot shivered, the crocks shattered, and nigh,  
His twisted scythe, melted by its fierce foe,  
Whose Parthian shot struck down the chimney. Slow  
Old Ward lays hand to his old working-friend,  
And thanking God Whose mercy did defend  
His servant, yet must drop a tear or two,  
Adrift on times when that old scythe was new;  
And stands in silent grief, nor hears the voices  
Of many a bird that through the land rejoices,  
Nor sees through the smashed panes the seagreen sky,  
That ripens into blue, nor knows the storm is by.

### *The Giant Puffball*

FROM what proud star I know not, but I found  
Myself newborn below the coppice rail,  
No bigger than the dewdrops and as round,  
In a soft sward, no cattle might assail.



And here I gathered mightiness and grew  
With this one dream kindling in me: that I  
Should never cease from conquering light and dew  
Till my white splendour touched the trembling sky.

A century of blue and stilly light  
Bowed down before me, the dew came agen,  
The moon my sibyl worshipped through the night,  
The sun returned and long revered: but then

Hoarse drooping darkness hung me with a shroud  
And switched at me with shrivelled leaves in scorn:  
Red morning stole beneath a grinning cloud,  
And suddenly clambering over dike and thorn

A half-moon host of churls with flags and sticks  
Hallooed and hurtled up the partridge brood,  
And Death clapped hands from all the echoing thickets,  
And trampling envy spied me where I stood;

Who haled me tired and quaking, hid me by,  
And came agen after an age of cold,  
And hung me in the prison-house a-dry  
From the great crossbeam. Here defiled and old

I perish through unnumbered hours, I swoon,  
Hacked with harsh knives to staunch a child's torn hand;  
And all my hopes must with my body soon  
Be but as crouching dust and wind-blown sand.

### *First Snow*

By the red chimney-pots the pigeons cower,  
With heads tucked in, to find what warmth they may;

Swift the white motes are come in a glistening shower,  
And the blue brightness that unsealed the day  
Is lost in wreathing grey.

Half hoping, and half doubting, small birds come  
And whistle on the taloned boughs; where still  
Pale apples swing, like masks that in old Rome  
The gardeners hung to warn each pilfering bill.  
But here worse gods shall kill.

The shower convolves and drives: all the trees' arms  
Are whitened over till small birds well know  
What fate has bidden. Faint from lonely farms  
Guns speak like echoes of the croaking crow.  
How silent comes the snow!

Now what shall warm the frost-burnt grape that clings  
To the green sapless vine? Poor budding rose  
And lavender's late blossom, get you wings  
To flee the death that in the winnow goes.  
Mute the cloaked village grows;

Not a bird pipes; nor cockerel calls the tune,  
But underneath the ivied paling passes  
With all his hens. The church clock drones the noon;  
In the brown gaping grave the snow amasses,  
The thin wind shakes the grasses.

To-day they bear the priest unto his rest  
Among his own, where he so long had willed.  
There he shall lie, time's winter in his breast,  
There the harsh tongue of malice shall be stilled,  
There toil's reward fulfilled.

If only through the snow and stomped mould he  
Might hear the bells or horses' brasses ring,  
The lads at football still, the children's glee  
At slide; the rooks, the baaing lambs in spring,  
Even his enemies sing!

## *Village Green*

THE thatched roofs green with moss and grass stand round,  
And earthy walls seem growing from the ground,  
Bold pipe the missel-bird and blue-cap gay  
From white-bloomed plum, nor fear the yokels' play;  
Who on the wet green whirl the ball about  
With monstrous shambling kicks; and in and out  
Among them plays the mongrel black and young  
As pleased as any there, and lolls his tongue.  
But near the postman watching "how she flies"  
The older dog looks on with pitying eyes,  
And thinks it only Tom-fool play, and droops  
His weary head away when laughter whoops  
To see tripped longshanks floundering on his back  
With trousers daubed in mire and face all black.

## *The Poor Man's Pig*

ALREADY fallen plum-bloom stars the green,  
And apple-boughs as knarred as old toads' backs  
Wear their small roses ere a rose is seen;  
The building thrush watches old Job who stacks  
The fresh-peeled osiers on the sunny fence,  
The pent sow grunts to hear him stumping by,  
And tries to push the bolt and scamper thence,  
But her ringed snout still keeps her to the sty.

Then out he lets her run; away she snorts  
In bundling gallop for the cottage door,  
With hungry hubbub begging crusts and orts,  
Then like the whirlwind bumping round once more;  
Nuzzling the dog, making the pullets run,  
And sulky as a child when her play's done.

## *The Covert*

I ALWAYS thought to find my love  
In some grove's ancient lair  
Where though all day my steps might rove  
No one beside would fare:

Among the small forgotten woods  
With clambering ivy laden,  
By ridings lost in bramble hoods  
I haunted for my maiden.

The greenest places I could find,  
Where underwoods are free  
To flourish like the taller kind,  
Seemed homes where she might be.

And nothing but the loitering brook  
Or bee with question rude  
Notice of my intrusion took  
Or felt my solitude.

The brook's eye mirrored me and seemed  
With my own thoughts to shine,  
The bee patrolling where I dreamed  
Grumbled for countersign.

"And are not maidens fair to see  
In every green and town?  
Why go you wooing secretly  
Through paths none travel down?"

Why stare you on the sunny grove  
Like pale ghosts on moonlight?  
But madness there will find a love  
And then be shut from sight."

Daphne from Phoëbus fled of old  
And grew into a tree,

And all the loves of heaven, I hold,  
On earth now prisoned be.

And it may be, from earth or air,  
My longing shall unsphere  
Beauty that only Daphnes wear,  
And so I tarry here—

Is there no spell upon this gloom  
So radiant, cool and green,  
As promises the sudden bloom  
Of the loveliest ever seen?

I know not how or when the One  
Shall come—long have I gazed—  
But shining like the vital sun  
Till even the wood's amazed,

The flower of cool and flower of bright  
And flower of woman too,  
In the green dusk a dazzling light  
Yet sweet as manna-dew:

Gliding into seen Form, where she  
A locked-up secret lay,  
From tingling air, from sighing tree—  
This Love shall crown my day.

—Thus murmured to himself the boy  
Where all the spinneys ring  
With as rich syllables of joy  
As ever hailed the spring.

### *The Last of Autumn*

FROM cloudy shapes of trees that cluster the hills  
The calm blue morning into brightness climbs;

And joy unhoped-for holds us hushed, and grace  
Lures love again to coigns whence the long vales  
Lie beautiful; that to my watch-tower come  
I haunt an hour, I warm to radiance too,  
By oaks that seem to kindle with the dawn.  
But near his noon the sun sheds dizzy light,  
And burning boughs burn with the dawn of death.

Shorn empty fields! where yet the eye discerns  
A harvest home; look how the expanses point  
To what the crowded season scorned, to stubs  
That hold afield their outlaw solitude,  
The mandrakes of the farms; see grouping sheep  
Dapple the broad pale green, nabbing or resting.  
Haystacks and hurdles gleam for honour now  
And troughs and hovels in the lonely spaces  
Rejected once are headstones in each corner.

Now once again the heart that long had feasted  
On revel of song and wing, then long had dimmed  
Its airy pleasure, cannot let a bird  
Chance by but counts him into memory's tribe.  
For there the witty jay laughs; here on waves  
Invisible ripples the linnet, gross rooks gabble,  
Or pheasant in his gaudy coat clangs past.  
These are the riches of our poverty,  
And all is peopled, though so few are there.

When sometimes wells a springing music from  
The belt of pines, then the glad moment cries  
"The nightingale," nor that same little bird,  
Who now in Abyssinia claps his wings,  
Might grieve to own the clear recalling call.

Then, senses, quicken, for it is not long—  
Though slowly flow the gentle shadows over.

Ivy with wasp and hornet buzzes still,  
Blue glittering flies are sunning on the stones,

And the hives among the nettles' chalky flowers  
Are toiling; welcome, wayside thistles' crown,  
And rare-grown daisy in the meadow, shine,  
Though your pale cheeks have lost their lovely red.

But the wind that frets the old and clinging leaves  
Arises deep, the very dirge and knell  
Of this doomed dream;  
And sets the weazel, where she hangs and dries  
To skin and bone, still with her whiskered snarl,  
A-swaying on the barren sloe-tree's thorn.

For slow and sure comes change, and in the mass  
Of time how swift! Look down the glade and know  
The timber felled, the vast too-cumbrous branch  
Fallen, by the pillar of white that lightning left.  
The village grandsires knew another glade.  
This day so seeming-still, so patient-paced  
Will drop down precipice darkness to its grave,  
The whirlpooled past, the legion roar of night  
Rend the tired world and leave it to its winter:  
Whose turbulent angers and fierce siege shall die  
When newness comes to the birth.

But who may tell  
When spring shall be again? and if these eyes  
Should then be shut to the brightness of her coming?  
So for her phantom violets I'll not lose  
These rich, these poor, these fading glowing lulls  
Nor drown my joy in boding. Better it were  
To be dull Thrift, than squander thus this day:  
Dull Thrift, who now has sown his mite of land,  
Has thrashed his corn and beans, and where the dew's  
Quicksilver bubbles lodge and shine all day  
In the cabbage leaves, and the last lady-bird  
Wafts her bright rosy way, leans pencilling coombs  
And cash upon his garden palisades.

## *Old Homes*

O HAPPIEST village! how I turned to you  
Beyond estranging years that cloaked my view  
With all their wintriness of fear and strain;  
I turned to you, I never turned in vain.  
Through fields yet ringing sad with fancy's dirge,  
Landscapes that hunt poor sleep to bedlam's verge,  
Green grow your leas, and sweet resound your woods,  
And laughing children paddle in your floods.

There the old houses where we lived abide,  
And I shall see them, though hot tears should hide  
The gaze of "home" from that which now I hold.  
What though pulled down?—to me they're as of old.  
The garrets creak as I tiptoe the boards  
To find the last lone tenant's fabled hoards,  
And silver on the dun November sky  
Through jarring panes I see the flood race by  
Brown hop-hills where the black bines moulder out.  
To these same panes, when full moon comes about,  
I hastening home lift daring eyes to learn  
If ghost eyes through their sullen crystal burn,  
And feel what sight cannot report, and fall  
A-shuddering even to face the unlit hall.

Passages crooked and slanted, ceilings stooped,  
And yews with drowsy arras overdrooped  
The windows of that home; the broad hearths wept  
With every shower; adry the great vats slept,  
Where one time kercher'd maids had toiled with a will:  
Such nooks were here, a hundred scarce would fill.  
And in the farm beside, the barn's sunk tiles  
Enclosed a space like to the church's aisles.

Then all about these vasty walls our play  
Would hold the evening's lanterned gloom at bay,  
And senses young received each new-found thing



As meadows feel and glow with inbreathed spring:  
Thence we have journeyed out to blue hills round,  
The pilgrims of a day's enchanted ground,  
And where we'd seen the crow or heron fly  
Have made our chartless way, passed far inns by,  
On edge of lily ponds have heard the jack  
From unknown holes leap, and shrunk trembling back,  
Have seen strange chimneys smoke, new runnels foam,  
Until quite surfeited we turned for home,  
Whose white walls rosy with the westering light  
Still of our journey seemed the noblest sight.

Thence too when high wind through the black clouds'  
pouring,  
Bowing the strong trees' creaking joints, went roaring,  
Adventure was to splash through the sightless lane  
When church-bells filled a pause of wind and rain,  
And once within the venerable walls  
To hear the elms without like waterfalls,  
While the cold arches murmured every prayer,  
And Advent hymns bade the round world prepare,  
Prepare! The next day with pale seas amazed  
We scarce had marvelled as we gaped and gazed  
If this had been the tempest harbinger  
Of the world's end and final Arbiter:  
The pollards in the yellow torrent drowning,  
The weir's huge jaw a-gnashing, all heaven frowning.

But there at length, beside that thunderous weir,  
Our lot was cast, and no less generous here  
Came each long day; not even the hours we spent  
Under old Grammar's eye unkindly went.  
We found his learning dry, in faith, and hit  
Disaster in our sleights for leavening it;  
But the big desks cut with heroic names,  
The gilded panel trumpeting past fames,  
Shields, pictures, solemn books of stars and sages,  
Kindled our pride in sense of mightier ages,

And an empty saddened field looked out below  
On trees where smouldered the quick fever-tinge  
Of Autumn, on the river's glaucous fringe,  
And our own cottage, its far lattice twinkling  
Across tired stubble sown with sheep-bells' tinkling.  
On airy wings the warning spirit sighed,  
But we, we heard not, thinking of Christmastide.

A love I had, as childhood ever will,  
And our first meeting I'll remember still;  
When to the farmhouse first we went, the may  
With white and red lit hedgegrows all the way,  
And there I saw her, in a red-may cloak  
To church going by; so delicately she spoke,  
So gracefully stept, so innocent-gay was her look,  
I got a flower; she put it in her book.  
And after, many eves, we walked for hours  
Like loving flowers among the other flowers,  
And blushed for pride when other girls and boys  
Laughed at us sweethearts in the playhour's noise—  
No more, this was a silly simple thing;  
Those two can never now walk so in spring;  
But to look back to child with child primrosing  
Is all the sweetness of each spring's unclosing.

Vision on vision blooms; long may they bloom,  
Through years that bring the philosophic gloom,  
Sweetening sleep with its strange agonies racked,  
And shedding dew on every parching tract,  
In every pleasant place a virtue adding,  
A herb of grace to keep the will from madding:  
And, happiest village, still I turn to you,  
The alabaster box of spikenard, you;  
To your knoll trees, your slow canal return  
In your kind farms or cottages sojourn;  
Enjoy the whim that on your church tower set  
The lead cowl like a Turkish minaret;  
Beat all your bounds, record each kiln and shed,

And watch the blue mists on each calm close spread.  
My day still breaks beyond your poplared East  
And in your pastoral still my life has rest.

## *Country Sale*

UNDER the thin green sky, the twilight day,  
The old home lies in public sad array,  
Its time being come, the lots ranged out in rows,  
And to each lot a ghost. The gathering grows  
With every minute, neckcloths and gold pins;  
Poverty's purples; red necks, horny skins,  
Odd peeping eyes, thin lips and hooking chins.

Then for the skirmish, and the thrusting groups  
Bidding for tubs and wire and chicken coops,  
While yet the women hang apart and eye  
Their friends and foes and reckon who will buy.  
The noisy field scarce knows itself, not one  
Takes notice of the old man's wavering moan  
Who hobbles with his hand still brushing tears  
And cries how this belonged here sixty years,  
And picks his brother's picture from the mass  
Of frames; and still from heap to heap folks pass.

The strife of tongues even tries the auctioneer,  
Who, next the dealer smirking to his leer,  
A jumped-up jerky cockerel on his box,  
Runs all his rigs, cracks all his jokes and mocks;  
"Madam, now never weary of well-doing,"  
The heavy faces gleam to hear him crowing.  
And swift the old home's fading. Here he bawls  
The white four-poster, with its proud recalls,  
But we on such old-fashioned lumber frown;  
"Passing away at a florin," grins the clown.  
Here Baskett's Prayer Book with his black and red  
Finds no more smile of welcome than the bed,  
Though policeman turn the page with wisdom's looks:

The hen-wives see no sense in such old books.  
Here painted trees and well-feigned towers arise  
And ships before the wind, that sixpence buys.

All's sold; then hasty vanmen pile and rope  
Their loads, and ponies stumble up the slope.  
And all are gone, the trampled paddock's bare;  
The children round the buildings run and blare,  
Thinking what times these are! not knowing how  
The heavy-handed fate has brought them low,  
Till quartern loaf be gone too soon to-day,  
And none is due to-morrow. Long, then, play,  
And make the lofts re-echo through the eve,  
And sweeten so the bitter taking-leave.

So runs the world away. Years hence shall find  
The mother weeping to her lonely mind,  
In some new place, thin set with makeshift gear,  
For the home she had before the fatal year;  
And still to this same anguish she'll recur,  
Reckoning up her fine old furniture,  
The tall clock with his church-bell time of day,  
The mirror where so deep the image lay,  
The china with its rivets numbered all,  
Seeming to have them in her hands—poor soul,  
Trembling and crying how these, loved so long,  
So beautiful, all went for an old song.

### *The Long Truce*

Rooks in black constellation slowly wheeling  
Over this pale sweet sky, and church-bells pealing  
Our homely pilgrims to the fount of healing;

The cypresses that swartly gather nigh,  
The grey conventicle that claims the sky  
Where the white rugged road climbs patient by;

The day and hour, the obedience of good people  
To the commandment singing from the steeple,  
All speak a calm sea and a gentle ripple.

I bless my chance that finds me this deep leisure,  
The voice of Sabbath with its lulling measure,  
I bless this England for such serious pleasure.

And gravely as I go I reach that grove  
Where once the Cavalier and Roundhead strove,  
And think, this peace rewards their rival love:

I see them now at truce eternal lying,  
With no hoarse trumpet summoning, none replying—  
Only in sweet content for England vying.

### *“Very Jewels in their Fair Estate”*

LOVE's a curious praiser  
And, whereas he misses  
What another gazer  
Sees in an instant, kisses  
For a charm that captured him,  
Though to others hard and dim.

England, be my duty  
Thine, though it discover  
How thy supreme beauty  
Meet not thy poor lover.  
If he whimsically extol,  
Thou knowest, love is whimsical.

That thy blue-eyed daring,  
Thy brave toiling patience,  
And thy chaste bright bearing  
Shine among all nations,

He must leave with reverence  
To larger-visioned eloquence.

That one green brook flashes  
Where primroses tremble,  
And in home elms and ashes  
Twilight rooks assemble,  
In thy borders, he will make  
His best music for thy sake.

Plough-teams on brown ridges,  
Lord of the harvest reaping,  
Master-fish by bridges  
In freshened milltails leaping,  
Low of herd and toll of bell,  
These with all his heart he'll tell.

Rosemarks, and wild roses,  
Of thy wealth he chooses;  
When day's anthem closes  
He as gladly muses  
On that beauty where farm lads  
Play at cricket with their dads.

Even the resting-places  
By each weathered steeple  
Smile him grace of graces:  
O happy were the people  
Whose tombstones pictured, long life done,  
Still, still a bright-haired rising sun.

### *Winter: East Anglia*

In a frosty sunset  
So fiery red with cold  
The footballers' onset  
Rings out glad and bold;

Then boys from daily tether  
With famous dogs at heel  
In starlight meet together  
And to farther hedges steal;  
Where the rats are pattering  
In and out the stacks,  
Owls with hatred chattering  
Swoop at the terriers' backs.  
And, frost forgot, the chase grows hot  
Till a rat's a foolish prize,  
But the cornered weasel stands his ground,  
Shrieks at the dogs and boys set round,  
Shrieks as he knows they stand all round,  
And hard as winter dies.

## *A Yeoman*

THIS man that at the wheatstack side  
Sits drinking of the twilight air,  
This man's my friend, in him's my guide  
And guard against the traps of care.

His life now past meridian mark  
One can but say is blossoming yet,  
His summer day smiles back the dark,  
His sun seems nearer rise than set.

In lusty youth when surging blood  
With foam and din bemuses most,  
Leander-like he rode the flood,  
And strongly came to manhood's coast.

Since, with a sturdy steady tread,  
He sowed and stored himself good grain,  
And glowing yet he bows his head  
With plough and scythe across the plain.

And like the north star stablished true  
He cheers and aids my asking eye;  
To see him at his door anew  
Is like a sign shown in the sky.

With all his calm he's eager still,  
New dreams in his old vision thrive,  
He seizes chance on dale and hill,  
And all his life has been alive.

## *Village*

WHAT happy place we travel through!  
Did wallflowers ever look so gay?  
Kissed by the periwinkle blue  
The old wall stoops above our way.

The chestnut climbs above the church  
And torches holds for the sun's amaze,  
The wind-cock glitters on his perch,  
The cows in dreams of grasses graze.

And for this blackclad ghost-like maid  
Whose cobbled shoes so wearily trace  
The dust, whose gaze on ground is laid,  
Whose steps are wounds—what happy place?

## *The Crown Inn*

ROUND all its nooks and corners goes  
The evening talk, in this old inn;  
The darkening room by use well knows  
Each thread of life that these upspin.



The triumphs of the wooer, player,  
Eclogues of praise for mead and beer,  
The fabled wealth, the generous fair  
Ring round the wonted changes here.

In elmtrees' gloom the western ray  
Drowns, the sad cloud steals like a shroud  
Drawn over one that died to-day,  
And to my spirit memory-bowed

The world with all its wars and wails  
Seems turning slow; but here are some  
With whom no black gazette prevails,  
Whom no disaster renders dumb.

Against the thunderclouds of race  
Their cottage candles give them light,  
They like their clocks keep one same pace  
While empires shudder into night.

### *The Midnight Skaters*

THE hop-poles stand in cones,  
The icy pond lurks under,  
The pole-tops steeple to the thrones  
Of stars, sound gulfs of wonder;  
But not the tallest there, 'tis said,  
Could fathom to this pond's black bed.

Then is not death at watch  
Within those secret waters?  
What wants he but to catch  
Earth's heedless sons and daughters?  
With but a crystal parapet  
Between, he has his engines set.

Then on, blood shouts, on, on,  
Twirl, wheel and whip above him,  
Dance on this ball-floor thin and wan,  
Use him as though you love him;  
Court him, elude him, reel and pass,  
And let him hate you through the glass.

## *Midnight*

THE last-lighted windows have darkened,  
The last courting pair have gone home;  
And moon and wind and the little shriek-owl  
All over the country roam.

The chimneys and roofs of the village  
Like a mystical figure are drawn  
On a cloud's white veil that sleeps and shines  
From the church to the sign of the Swan.

Between blue and silver the by-road  
Runs, hides and again gleams free;  
The moon seems loitering, like the wind  
That kisses the hawthorn tree.

Far glistens that tree in the meadow,  
But the spirit of love hither borne  
In glimmerings and sighings, O can such a joy  
Be the wind in the moonlit thorn?

## *The Baker's Van*

VILLAGE children shouted shrill,  
"What ch'er, Baker!" "Way up, Will!"  
As I passed he stopped his van  
To tell me, "Your luck's in, old man."

"I was nothing but a fool  
When I left your father's school;  
He said many and many a time  
If I wanted, I could climb.

"He said, he'd not had one more quick  
At history and arithmetic,  
He framed my drawings for the wall,  
An oak leaf and a cricket ball.

"But my dad, you know, was stiff,  
And laughed and huffed—There's always *If*:  
There's none of us been scholars yet,  
There's honest work for us to get.

"So here I am; and there are you,  
Always starting something new;  
They tell me, if you shine this way,  
It's college for you some fine day.

"Good boy!" He sighed; and called his horse,  
And drove upon his daily course,  
And when he called at Golden Green  
Was still in a brown study seen.

### *Pride of the Village*

A NEW grave meets the hastiest passer's eye,  
It's reared so high, it lacks not some white wreath;  
Old ones are not so noticed; low they lie  
And lower till the equal grass forgets  
The bones beneath.  
His now, a modest hillock it must be,  
The wooden cross scarce tells such as pass by  
The painted name; beneath the chestnut tree  
Sleep centuries of such glories and regrets.

But I can tell you, boys who that way run  
With bat and ball down to the calm smooth leas,  
Your village story's somewhere bright with one  
To whom all looked with an approving joy  
In hours like these.

Cricket to us, like you, was more than play,  
It was a worship in the summer sun,  
And when Tom Fletcher in the month of May  
Went to the field, the feet of many a boy

Scarce pressed the buttercups; then we stood there  
Rapt, as he took the bat and lit day's close,  
Gliding and glancing, guiding fine or square  
The subtlest bowls, and smoothing, as wave-wise  
Rough-hurled they rose,  
With a sweet sureness; his especial ease  
Did what huge sinews could not; to a hair  
His grey eye measured, and from the far trees  
Old watchers lobbed the ball with merry cries.

And when the whitened creases marked the match,  
Though shaking hands and pipes gone out revealed  
The hour's impress and burden, and the catch  
Or stumps askew meant it was Tom's turn next,  
He walked afield  
Modest, and small, and seldom failed to raise  
Our score and spirits, great delight to watch;  
And where old souls broke chuckling forth in praise  
Round the ale booth, Tom's cricket was the text.

Summers slipt out of sight; next summer—hush!  
The winter came between, and Tom was ill,  
And worse, and with the spring's sweet rosy flush,  
His face was flushed with perilous rose; he stayed  
Indoors, and still  
We hoped; but elders said, "Tom's going home."  
The brake took cricketers by inn and bush,  
But Tom not there! What team could leave out Tom?  
He took his last short walk, a trembling shade.

And "short and sweet," he said, for his tombstone  
Would be the word; but paint and wood decay,  
And since he died the wind of war has blown  
His old companions far beyond the green  
Where many a day  
He made his poems out of bat and ball.  
Some few may yet be left who all alone  
Can tell you, boys who run at cricket's call,  
What a low hillock by your path may mean.

### *Muffled*

BLACK ponds and boughs of clay and sulky sedge  
Make their dull answer to the inquiring eye;  
With worrying weakness wrens flit through the hedge,  
And black rooks blot the south's thin jaundice sky;  
Black over heavy plough the lonely inn  
Stares without message at the far black mill,  
The dry leaves creep, one even dares to spin,  
The sun's last wish dies ere it reach the hill.

With wrapt throat in the courtyard of the farm  
Maid waits for maid; bells call them, arm-in-arm,  
To Advent prayer; the half-lit church is waiting.  
Emmanuel, come! now, parson, hail that light—  
God knows we need one in this glum black night,  
When even the owls and bats are hesitating.

### *Another Spring*

WHEN lambs were come, who could be slow and sere?  
When lambs were come, and each black thorny rod  
Lit up with seraph birth and budded clear,  
Fresh as the lambs and clouds, and smiled at God.  
The clay-green from the river solved away  
Till all was crystal; who the crystal coned  
Saw where blue pike with their wild lasses lay,  
And by old ragstones the new waving frond.

And many a girl by tinkling pastures stood  
With primrose brow toward eve's single gem,  
And waited in the bright ethereal mood  
For one who then would kiss her garments' hem,  
Some don and darling of our rural sphere,  
That now, this soon-come spring, goes slow and sere.

## *The Unknown Quantity*

MANDA's twig-like arms  
And nebulous and slanting eyes  
Seemed a world of charms;  
Husky though they were, her sighs  
Took our lads with sweet surprise.

What could Manda say?  
Nothing; but that nothing tranced  
Lads that ploughed all day.  
All dolled up as eve advanced  
With Manda round the room they pranced.

Came no fête nor fair  
But this maid with her long neck  
Would be early there;  
She had but to peek and beck,  
She the sea-ghost, they the wreck.

Then by chance as she  
From the swingboat slunk along  
With her light tee-hee,  
And her humming latest-song,  
Several felt the call too strong.

On this point the squire  
Unintentionally might,  
By his study fire,  
Throw a ray of simple light  
And give us Manda's story right.

For, it seems, of late  
More than one of our young men  
Sought him, and would state  
Mother's chest was bad again,  
The bill before was three pound ten,

And a labouring man  
Could not nohow raise the money:  
While the woe so ran,  
Manda turned from Joe to Johnny,  
Or, at Hugh's cost, found Jack "too funny."

On one summer day  
Manda almost fell a-thinking—  
In a modest way—  
Some were dangerous who'd been drinking:  
Then she fell once more to prinking.

On that last swift day  
She read of something dreadful done  
By lovers far away—  
Sighed—shrieked—that fool, that madman John,  
The snarl, the fist, the knife in the sun!

## *The Puzzle*

THE cuckoo with a strong flute,  
The orchard with a mild sigh,  
Bird and blossom so salute  
The rainbow sky.

The brown herd in the green shade,  
The parson in his lawn chair,  
Poor and gentry both evade  
The furnace air.

The moon-inveigled mushroom,  
The crocus with her frail horn,  
Gaze in dumb dread through the gloom  
Of late moist morn.

The dead leaf on the highlands,  
The old tramp on the mill drove,  
Each whirls on nor understands  
God's freezing love.

### *No Continuing City*

THE train with its smoke and its rattle went on,  
And the heavy-cheeked porter wheeled off his mixed load;  
She shivered, and stood as if loth to be gone,  
Staring this way and that—on the watery road,  
And the inn with its arbour all naked and bleak,  
And the weir churning foam, and the meaningless oast;  
Till her husband turned back, and he stroked her pale cheek.  
"O dear," murmured she, "must we go? but at most  
I shall never live here  
Above half a year."

And he with eyes keen as his bright singing mind,  
While the cab tumbled on through the drifts of brown mist,  
Shared her trouble; but knew that his future designed  
A loftier life, could they meantime exist:  
Then he sparkled and jested, and kissed his young sweet,  
And they turned to the village, and stopped at the green  
To enter the schoolhouse with echoing feet;  
And she scanned, and she planned, though she murmured between  
"I can never stay here  
Above half a year."

And now forty years of his scholars have passed,  
Dunce, sluggard and prizeman; the master remains:  
He has built a new wing; and the school cap's recast;  
And he makes his old jokes about beauty and brains.



And *she* speaks of home, but it is not this place,  
But where a white waterfall springs down the crags,  
And she goes to the garret, and stares into space,  
Yet smiles when he finds her. The village tongue wags,  
                                "‘She’ll never be here  
                                At this time next year.’"

## *The Last Ray*

Now the world grows weak again, the sinewed woods are all  
    astrain,  
And Tempest in his ecstasy on horn or pipé or harp or drum  
Makes his mad asymphony; he runs like wild hogs, stops like a  
    child,  
Shrieks like a warning water-bird, and mutters *fee* and *fo* and *fum*.

Now through all this travail fierce one sunbeam does not fail to  
    pierce  
The spider-curtained darkness in the attic of black Jacob’s farm,  
And finds up there the purple phial that waits this glance: the sun’s  
    espial  
Is not alone: the poor soul there spies as well the lurking charm.

*Gods*, she cries, tiptoes and takes, and glaring opens, sniffs and  
    shakes,  
While on her soul the stormsong bursts, and groanings knell  
    through roof and flue;  
Clashing gloom is whirled across, she drinks, and smashes the  
    cold glass,  
And sneers as one great laugh or gust huffs down the writhing  
    avenue.

## *Augury*

WHAT sweeter sight will ever charm the eye  
Than robin come to claim his largess old,  
And pinnacled against the eager sky  
Daring the armies of the brazen cold?

And wren a-running, while the storm shrouds all  
The swinging mill-sails and black ghosts of groves,  
Among the weeds that shake beneath the wall—  
She well may vie with him in all our loves.

The mystery of the dark birthday of spring  
Ever to childhood flowered into a sign  
As over me I saw the paired swans wing  
In whose wild breasts the gods made the light shine;  
And song and wing have measured year on year,  
Recorders of my solitude, till the sun  
Is the bright hymn of nations of the air,  
And evening and the dream-like owl are one.

So copses green start out of time stol'n hence  
Because they rang with nightingales above  
Their fellows, so returns dear innocence  
At recollection of the lulling dove.  
For alms the redbreast comes, the wren dares run,  
While rook and magpie saunter through the sky,  
All with their kinship of the morning sun—  
In what rare element they sing and fly!

But oh, how bitter burns these fair ones' pain  
When satyr hands in cages shut their young,  
The old ones coming with their food in vain  
Till death's a mercy! Oh, how great the wrong  
That shuts 'em in, that starves but one small owl  
Snatched into glaring day and mocks his hate:  
And who, the wonder is, but djinn and ghoul  
Could steal one mothering wing for folly's bait?

### *Shooting Star at Harvest*

A BELL softer than silence,  
A tear happier than mirth,  
They meet me in the fields  
And charm me from this earth—

This earth now in its twilight,  
And calm Autumn abroad,  
The mothering fields at rest,  
In the praise of their lingering God.

His light kindly infolding  
The still, giant d'omains,  
Glow on in me until  
I seek—what sunset plains?

The star falls in enchantment  
Adown infinite blue,  
And fades from its white fire  
To live in rapture new.

### *Water Moment*

THE silver eel slips through the waving weeds,  
And in the tunnelled shining stone recedes;  
The earnest eye surveys the crystal pond  
And guards the cave: the sweet shoals pass beyond.  
The watery jewels that these have for eyes,  
The tiger streaks of him that hindmost plies,  
The red-gold wings that smooth their daring paces,  
The sunlight dancing about their airs and graces,  
Burn that strange watcher's heart; then the sly brain  
Speaks, all the dumb shoal shrieks, and by the stone  
The silver death writhes with the chosen one.

### *Time of Roses*

CLEAN flows the wind as from its grand source flowing  
At once to man, clean flows the eternal God:  
The clouds dance with that splendid presence glowing,  
Earth's silver brilliance flashes from that flood.

Sweet airs and utterance meet me as I rove,  
Long dead to me! nor angels might outshine  
Those martins with their white breasts warm with love,  
Building their home beneath the eaves of mine.

And roses in their ecstasy have come;  
We see no hut, no hall but there they wreath  
Their araby, and their sweet lives outbreathe.  
Rude hedges have their thousands too: where some  
So nestle down, the dazzled eye supposes  
At first that this year grass has brought forth roses.

### *Waste Ground*

THE wheat crowds close, the land falls sharp,  
And shrubs of all sorts mark the scarp,  
Where birds are welcome, sweet or shrill,  
To share all secrets save man's will,  
And moths as dappled as the pard  
Or brown as Caribs pass the guard.

Here's a place but rarely trod,  
And belongs to some old god.  
Deep adown we tell the stream  
By a whisper or a gleam;  
Willow leaves wrapt grey above  
Like the feathers of a dove,  
And such green thickets gathered round,  
The ripple might be underground.  
Thistles, most, jump from the marl,  
Baring teeth in sullen snarl.  
Perhaps when Magog was a child  
They grew in gardens, lilies wild;  
Injured here they nurse their grievance;  
Briars and nettles nod connivance.  
Beyond, the brook bedews the lane,

The gravel groans beneath the wain;  
The peeping leveret pricks his ears,  
But to his sweetmeat soon repairs;  
So ancient is the solitude,  
So rarely is the fort reviewed,  
Here the saddest soul might come  
And for philosophy have room,  
And old gods well find message  
To sleep away a graceless age.

And yet on this the church top stares,  
And some hallooing gargoyle glares,  
Even gardens lie a stone's throw hence  
With white clothes sunning on the fence,  
And hayricks rise by the Black Boy stable,  
The neighbours of a niche for fable.

## *Blue Butterfly*

HERE Lucy paused for the blue butterfly—  
Blue with the mingled colours of the sky:  
Here Lucy paused, and murmured to behold  
His fingers long or feelers ringed with gold,  
Ebony-ringed like cowboy's switches are,  
And touched with sunset and its seraph star.

Frilled round he was, she bade me look, with white;  
Over his body blossomed a soft light;  
And in his wings a ruddiness remained  
Like thunder skies, yet thence his sweet blue gained;  
And when he shut his timid wings, then even  
His undersides proclaimed a child of heaven,  
Flecked with dark eyes, in paly circlets crowned.

Vetches of scarlet vein were legion round;  
The speckled orchid grew, wild bean beside;

The aspens like a pebbled water sighed;  
When he rose up to feathery fanning flight  
And over sweetbriar dancing went from sight.  
And here I see him yet, and Lucy's eye  
Smiles on him from that day so past fled by,  
And her delight so trembling and so true  
Is whispering in my lonely walk anew.

## *Rustic Wreath*

*With May's tomthumb and daisy come,  
With May's moondaisy countless come,  
I take my ease upon the heath  
And of my pleasures tie my wreath.*

I take my ease; and yet I meet  
A bitter prelude to much sweet:  
The cat skulks close as hare in fourm,  
Bounds away at mischief's speed;  
I find her grassy ambush warm  
Where feathers small convict her greed:  
I wish, a mischief end such bliss  
Or them that starve her into this.

But now the cottage chimneys fail  
To overpeer the happier vale:  
See lively frog come down the track,  
Blotched like dead leaves his yellow back,  
And eyes like gems in black chaps set—  
A finer gipsy I never met:  
Then in the velvet paddock, while  
Through amber rain the sunbeams smile,  
The cows in all their white and red,  
As though of Zion's pasture bred!

What roses and what elders flower!  
For mating birds how many a bower!

Without a care, here in the way,  
A butterfly dreams life away,  
Then in a terror at my tread  
Shuts to a leaf or twig that's dead,  
And on his wings my love describes  
Those beauty-spots like little eyes.

Here once a cottage was, it looks,  
Here yet its fruit-trees shield love-nooks,  
Its well's pure-watered diamond;  
That rose-bush twinkling pink beyond  
A whole day's counting has put forth  
Her buds and swells the natural mirth  
Of a warm corner where the sun  
Shines as he only loved that one.

So, if this hour were now to grow  
An age, this humble haunt would glow  
With a contenting paradise,  
Though never through the sunlight rise  
Those crystal towers and souls of trees  
And mounts of gold that fancy sees;  
Though there the heavenly rose appear,  
And only earth's rude rustic here.

### *Brook in Drought*

THE willow catkins fall on the muddy pool  
Churned up anew by cows who came to cool:  
And under shoal the sticklebacks, to whom  
The infant stream is like the whale's searoom,  
Or Amazon to a cayman; wondering there,  
They rise and thrilling sip that strange sharp Air.  
The plunging stone down from the dwarf bridge thrown  
Is Zeus's bolt—Zeus shambles whistling on,  
And from their puny caverns they are seen  
Returning where the high god's wrath has been.

Meantime a god indeed with fierce desire  
Drinks of their lessening waters, tongued with fire;  
He all along the willows' silver line  
Diminishes the pools that pleased the kine,  
And in a day will strew with tiny bones  
This universe dried into sands and stones.

### *Rosa Mundi*

THERE in a solitude of silence slips  
The sun's red rose down to the damps of night,  
The long grass soon will hide that saddening light,  
Bloom past mature, touched with frost's embering lips;  
All the earth eyes seem your way bent, red rose!  
Lovestruck, the lark leaps up to hoard farewell  
With one last flash, one pleasure more to tell;  
The red rose falls, the dusky windwave flows

Through the concealing grass, tomorrow's hay.  
The brown owl on the tall post mews and peers,  
But that divine bloom's gone; the white owl veers  
His body of a fish far down that way  
Where dropped that petal. Along the cattled glade  
The trees are weeping women, the pearled downs  
Put off their glory, and the eyesight drowns  
As though through tears, where the last blossom's laid.

And true, man finds himself to tears betrayed.  
Though thought, youth, joy, laborious in the bright  
Have manned their stratagems in tears' despite,  
—But like a spy the shadow passed their enfilade.

### *Interval*

WHEN the cloudy evening shows  
Her white forehead smooth and wise,



Whispering truce to friends and foes,  
Content will from his cobbling rise;  
Along the cornside then strolls he  
And never felt more gay and free.

Lured by that delightful muse  
Freedom peacefully prevails;  
Boldly then Content pursues  
The privilege of downs and dales;  
No sooner from his door he gets  
Than his unharnessed mood curvets.

In the plum above his thatch  
Two young starlings stretch their throats,  
The creaking door and clapping latch  
Only provoke their shapeless notes;  
Two bills upthrust gluck, glup, and wail  
"The sons of freedom shall prevail."

Then across the liberal leys  
Where brown heads just top the green,  
Where the coney-courtship plays,  
The tameless wind dares intervene:  
And, where Content so lightly strolls,  
He spins the parsley parasols,

And bows blooms down, this way and that,  
And they as graceful as can be  
Protest but askingly thereat  
And bid the free caress the free,  
Till this republican delight  
Makes jealous the usurping night.

Here a word and there a word  
The rooks in elmen summits talk,  
Some casual wood-side bark is heard,  
Or nibbling mouse beside the baulk—  
Nightingales begin and pause  
As if their music knew no laws.

So winning is the time's white whim,  
So indolent and lively too,  
Our yeoman finds the dusk and dim  
More lighted than the mooning blue;  
And on he sings and saunters there,  
Suddenly unconfined as air.

## *The Masquerade*

HERE winds

The chiding chiming brook caught in two minds,  
Here it breaks away from shadow and might  
Break a heart some day recalling its delight.  
Then, that child dance gone,  
Our rivulet puts a river's mantle on,  
Sweet mimic, swelling its blue breadth between  
Mild open levels green.  
Now, on its breast, how glides  
The secret wind with forked wave,  
And how the pike young, long and clean  
Sleeps in his azure cave!  
Warm-bosomed hawthorn stands in fruitful rest  
Beside, and breathes her mayflowers' araby,  
And there, even more enchanting me,  
The millionth thrush has built her nest,  
That safety and sweet beckoning breeze not fail,  
When great life calls the young ones from their shells  
To their round cot of clay: cool stream, avail!  
And the good mother knows that one due day,  
Destined with golden beams, life points their way,  
Paints their long landscape, the large lordships tells,  
Far from the river in their natal dale.

And so you are become a river,  
With the iris fenced, the grove  
Of serpent water-withes inwove!

Vain; say nay, you child deceiver;  
Here the shepherd's penstock ends the scene,  
At whose mossed doors your serious prank is done.  
Each way the willows slyly laughing lean  
To see your sleep-like walking  
On a sudden change, leap, rove and run  
In bright gold shallows, crystal one,  
With ringed lights dabbling and twirling the brambles and to  
yourself a-singing and a-talking.

### *A Budding Morrow*

WHEN I woke, the sapphire sky  
Through the panes was gazing;  
Bright the wind was waving by  
The chestnuts' yellow blazing.

When I went abroad, the land  
Proclaimed a new dominion,  
The slow black lanes which ploughs had planned  
Shone vital and virginian.

Where the last night's seething rain  
Lay in my neighbour's hiring,  
It glittered mist and fire amain,  
Sun-desired, desiring.

Old hares limped from frond to frond,  
With joy half-mastering terror,  
And lonely trees blushed rose beyond  
Like Venus in a mirror.

Oak-woods that heard the rill-like gush  
Of western wind's compassion  
Let fall their leaves, and then fell hush  
For new annunciation.

I who had drooped the last eve's hours  
To think the year forsaken  
Saw all the air bloom with fine flowers,  
And laughed to have been mistaken.

### *A Pastoral*

WHEN the young year is sweetest, when the year  
Is a symphony of sounds and scents and seeings  
That gather in the sky in shining clouds,  
And souls fly nearer their glad soul a moment  
—Then Collins Meadow is the place to walk.  
To know it afar, it's worthy with those colours  
That old and saintly patiences inbloomed  
On sacred leaves of missals: all around  
The land's a sweet book, close is a sweet page,  
But this the initial and the crownèd A.  
Then, poet, take your subtlest instrument,  
That the grace and marvel may repeated flow  
Beyond their range, since hills and woods immure,  
To them who never came here. The dead artist  
Hath left men vases where awhile is held  
A rosy odour, and an ecstasy:  
But you, with words of sooner perished clay,  
To catch and cup but a millionth drop of the joy  
That in this meadow runs, swims, slides, basks, rings—  
Call to the ghosts of Ida, for they knew.  
Meantime the lonely soul will hover here  
In bright transcendence and in humble prayer  
Till one companion come through dewy leaves.

The young year being so rosy now,  
Sound, scent and seeing one posy now,  
The sunny symphony of pastoral reeds  
Hovering and sparkling as the west wind leads  
With such a touch on harps of weeds  
As makes each one Apollo's bough—

The young year gleaming white and blue  
Walks in the sun, and will not you?  
In these green freedoms there's no sense  
Of what the tithe-map feigns a fence—  
This meadow is the one we find  
On clumsier surveys close confined,  
But to my mind it none the less  
Answers the kin sky's boundlessness:  
In this savannah Number's span  
Is nothing; past his topmost plan  
Would spring the star-flowers, and a linnet  
Hold her house, and five young in it.  
Come you will: here all is well—  
The far church clock with judging bell  
Is but one ban:  
One low note falls,  
One sad and solitary trumpet calls,  
One dull drum blackens on the rich blue firmament  
of song:  
But the west wind he will wean us away,  
He again on his ravishing pipes does play,  
And up among the living air  
Makes holiday and magic there—  
That might be hushed, unless you come ere long.

### *The Embryo*

THAT grey-green river pouring past,  
The moorhen and the vole,  
Though spring was dark above,  
Will always haunt my soul.

Old thorny plum-trees running wild  
Beside the river donned  
White bloom—ah, not too old for love,  
Though day looked stone beyond.

No one yet crossed the muddy plank  
That bridged the full creek round,  
Nor on the flood-strewn isle  
Sought summer's camping-ground;

Where, to be sure, a drowned sheep lodged  
In a black holt of alders,  
Its poor fleece brown and vile,  
To shudder young beholders.

Surly the day leaned down, its breath  
Bit; yet through frown and chill  
This otter's-home, this stream  
Full-marching to the mill,

The claw-like trees, the cryptic gloom  
Enwombed a joy that drew  
Through grey-green depths the bream,  
The swans through air anew.

## *Misunderstandings*

In the bright shallow of this broadened dyke,  
Whose willow-wood, late chopt, gives now  
Not one sweet shading bough,  
See in the sun the two young mating pike  
With golden strakes and dapplings fine  
In mutual love themselves align;  
Where he and she together bask and dream,  
There is no time but that, no other theme.

The flooded river hurled and flurried hoarse  
With lashing branches and brown scum,  
And yet the time was come.  
These following love up a still lonely course  
Reached their imagined bower, nor knew  
The dwindled river far withdrew.

And now in unsuspecting love they lie  
In the bright prison where they soon must die.

The mild wood-pigeon looked, and look she might  
For last year's willow-wood: 'twas gone!  
She rose and floated on  
To one near by; and there in April light,  
Her thin twigs set, sat warming two  
Sweet eggs, that shone like roses through.  
Man came, she startled; he but looked and learned,  
But to her frost-cold eggs she ne'er returned.

## *Hawthorn*

BENEATH that hawthorn shade the grass will hardly grow,  
So many babes have played and kept the bare clay so,  
So many loves delayed in the moonlight's ebb and flow—  
Daisy-chains and May beginnings,  
Fail not till I pass below.

The roots of this same thorn are polished like a stool,  
Each grey and goblin horn grown craftwise beautiful,  
And sometimes to adorn is left a tuft of wool—  
I envy still the merry runnings  
Of those that pass that way from school.

The moonlight through the may and the whisper fluttering  
there,  
Like angels on their way to the lamp of pain and prayer,  
Gleams and ripples play, and we lay our forehead bare,  
For here the coolest, cleverest cunning  
Know the unknown's wingèd air.

Come, little tiny child, here's white violets for thee,  
Come, smiling beauty wild, love's the dryad of this tree,  
And thou baptizèd mild, this thorny chapel see,  
And may I for all my sinnings  
Sit in this same sanctuary.

# *An Ancient Goddess*

IN TWO PICTURES

## I

THE time grows perilous; forth she comes once more,  
The ghost, the dying lady and dead star;  
Empress and votaress, to whom the roar  
Of ocean towers from many a reef and bar,  
Nor less love's whispering dares respond so far;  
She comes, upon whose tombless face have I  
Gazed long in statued muteness singular,  
These eyes enchanted by that inward eye;  
What tragic Need impels this ghost into our sky?

Herself impels and moves the life we know,  
But whither? in what thought? To what sad grove  
Guides she the stolen spirit? When the glow  
Of morning clothes us, up spring joy and love;  
The sunbeam is perennial treasure-trove.  
The sun's a triumph, and his laughing zest  
Round the world's homesteads huntsman-like arove  
Makes man much more the man. This other quest  
Lures out the voiceless bird, unwarms the empty nest.

Veiled now in violet wreathes she gliding mocks  
The taken sense; what frown, what mal-ease there!  
She is but dusty seas and steely rocks,  
She is a brooding badness in the air.  
But while we speak, we think afresh, nor dare  
Assail what so intrinse and magic dwells  
In the night's breast. And soon all snow-white there  
Palely she moves. That paleness nothing tells.  
Unknowable, she passes all our sentinels.

## II

ABOVE the whole world, walking the blue space  
Where many worlds are pale or glittering wheeled,



We know that Phœbe dotes upon this place,  
This tiny place, this lodging in the field,  
Dearest of all; so calmly yearning  
She holds the open sky,  
And every crevice, path and turning  
Lures her love-diffusing eye  
Till all with not a little joy confess  
They are the chosen of that loveliness.

There is a sluice through whose rude-masoned stones  
And fissured planks our timid river falls.  
Day with his loud light quells his watery tones,  
But hear him now! as though a sea-god calls:  
Hushed then awhile, then tide-like booming—  
The hill-top wanderer hears,  
And she on high, without fault blooming,  
In his shadowed crystal peers,  
And fishes rise that in the silver blaze  
Hurl their new sheen and diamonded rays.

Meanwhile the woods with ichor in their limbs  
Wake in a dance of slow religious love;  
A whispering music in this spinney brims,  
Floats heavenward; fades; then answers that great grove.  
Youth here with light and eager greeting  
And age with museful sighs  
In tune and order claim the meeting  
With the enchantress of the skies—  
All, all our valley, to the tiniest flowers,  
And shyest wings, is singing, She is ours.

Nor could she touch with fonder glad caress  
Even the churl outlands of our country homes.  
Conceive you cannot that such pleasantness  
Smiles on unmerit when from here she roams:  
The ridge so flinty and so boorish  
Seems a bosom dreaming warm,  
The swamp sharp-sworded, bleak and moorish,  
Glows like lamplight from a farm,

And even the condemned house reveals a bloom  
Hovering like pity in each suspect room.

In our kind cottages the babies wake,  
At once with hasty fear the mothers raise  
Their patient heads; then not a sound they make,  
For beautiful's the infant in 'amaze  
At latticed moonlight, branching holy  
Upon the fairy wall;  
The child voice musically and lowly  
With a new note, a bird call,  
Increases what appeared past all increase,  
And deepens even the mother's love and peace.

More wonders yet in this our lucky vale,  
When the moon marks and clasps it for her joy!  
Have we not seen, when moon and nightingale  
Enlusted the green season, some young boy  
Beside the old tower's solemn stature  
At watch, in heaven alone,  
As though this night ancestral nature  
Called him there to make it known  
That he in after-time should find such hours  
A moonlit sanctuary from time's worst powers?

### *The Passer-by*

THE listless year goes dimly down,  
The sun flares low on meadows brown,  
And at the low end of the town  
The ploughman sits with heavy dreams.

Crouched on the fallen oak alone  
With fingers slack he spins a stone,  
Thinking of youth and mirth once known,  
With friends as nimble as morning-beams,

Who sped with him to this playground,  
Now threadbare, dumb and sportless found,  
To laugh and leap the free year round,  
    With bats or rods, in floods or flowers.

The sudden air is loud with those!  
He lifts his face: by heaven, there goes  
A figure whom he surely knows,  
    His mate. He stares with all his powers:

The figure passes without pause.  
He thinks, that was old Ro, that was—  
Call him? recall him? . . . He withdraws,  
    Flings down his stone, jeers at his heart:

As though that stranger passing now  
Would wish to know a lad from plough  
With whom some cobwebbed boyish vow  
    Once ended "never, never part"!

## *Early and Late*

How fondly still the Grecian form,  
    Young, swift and warm  
    Is homing here;  
Among our British commonwealth  
Of farmyard habit, meadow health,  
    And holt and mere!

When morn discerns our lawny green  
    Daphne is seen  
    Weeping and wild,  
Till wiser Phoebus travelling there  
Caresses music from her hair  
    With honour mild.

The brook below the floodgate swirls  
For Naiad girls  
To talk and play,  
And there though chance some labouring-man  
Part the dense boughs to dip his can  
They dance all day.

We see our black-faced sheep anon  
All stare as one  
At thickets nigh,  
And almost catch the horned and rude  
Woodgod at gaze ere satyr-shrewd  
He dodges by.

Be apt, lest even while you come  
From market-hum  
And county trade,  
Yon whistling lad should *Mercury* be  
And those fine shorthorns, without fee  
By him conveyed!

The country year's an Orpheus tune,  
In joyous June  
All courting dreams,  
Till with cold lips and blue he roves  
Half-lost by wintry pits and groves  
And hoarse grey streams.

For Persephassa then our eyes  
With tired surmise  
Search thorned wet haze;  
Then there she smiles a-primrosing  
Where the flags fly and steeples ring  
In Easter rays!

## *Departure*

THE beech leaves caught in a moment gust  
Run like bowled pennies in the autumn's dust

And topple; frost like rain  
Comes spangling down; through the prisms trees  
Phoebus mistakes our horse for his,  
Such glory clothes his mane.

The stream makes his glen music alone  
And plays upon shell and pot and stone—  
Our life's after-refrain;  
Till in the sky the tower's old song  
Reads us the hour, and reads it wrong,  
And carter-like comes whistling along  
Our casual Anglian train.

## *Libertine*

In summer-time when haymaking's there  
And master fish leap out of the pools,  
I'll take an oak for my easy chair,  
Be club and president, ruler and rules.

The dew of the dawn there haunts all day,  
The silver ripple and willow-wren chime;  
The bee will pass on his gipsying way  
And everything dote on summer-time.

If sweet it is to be safe ashore  
When the merchantman plunges into the trough,  
I think that ambush is sweetness galore  
Whence I may study, some furlongs off,

Old ale-faced industry mopping his brow,  
Hot shouldering and shaping heap on heap,  
While I sit under the church-cool bough  
And a Dryad will peep when she thinks I'm asleep.

## *Winter Nights*

### A BACKWARD LOOK

STRANGE chord! the weir-pool's tussling dance,  
Curt crows, and a pleading bell;  
While westward day with a mænad glance  
Bids the blue-lipped floods farewell.  
The star-led enemy airs begin  
To prowl in a deadly crawl,  
And along these village parapets thin  
Swoops Night like the end of all.

Black amphitheatre, eyeless Shades  
That stalk the monstrous stage,  
Here vainly descend your ghostly raids  
And measureless icy rage!  
Here village blood to the threat in the air  
Responds with sparkling streams,  
And here and there and everywhere  
Humanity's victory beams.

See Peter in the latticed loft  
Put the last of his work away;  
His mood—the apple-scent not so soft,  
And the lantern's honey ray  
So paints his cheek, that the urchin lad  
That haunts him whenever he can  
Copies his tread, and calls him dad,  
And feels ten times a man.

In the inn the creased young shopman shines  
At the lancers and quadrilles,  
Up and down, in and out the smiling lines  
His twinkling courtesy thrills  
Lavinia here, Amelia there—  
Their blushes flower in pleasure,  
And smoothing back their straying hair  
They enchant themselves with the measure.

Or the pearl shield that tilting fish below  
Through arras of blue water-mosses show.  
What need for templed lotus, when our stream  
Enthroned the yellow lily? here the dream  
Of placid Buddha might be as secure;  
Visitant wings there were, that loved the lure.

With all my years this pretty stream sang on.  
I brought one here to praise it; who is gone,  
Yet in that crystal soul her mirrored face  
With foxgloves looking in still finds a place.  
Even the Muse's "melody unheard"  
For me is woven with this water's word,  
Since here I sat to read immortal song;  
The ripple played to that, nor answered wrong.  
All that deep-sighing elegy might mourn,  
Glad lyric hail, and sonnet-thought adorn,  
The changeful rivulet from stone to stone  
Enchanted into anthems of its own.

My travel then! my wealth, my dream, my love,  
True Golden Treasury and Golden Grove!  
Accept one weakness, let one pale shade cling  
Where with so strong a life you run and sing.

### *Kingfisher*

THE eastern God with natural blessing gleams  
Upon our temple of another faith,  
And wakes our world; our hills, our streams,  
Farms, anvils all begin afresh. Each wraith  
That even in this sweet glade  
Clings with the bat and moth below night's covert shade  
Is sent away; fast flit the shoal  
Of water-ghosts, they end their white patrol  
Of foam-flowered whirlpools; none deny  
That ancient, sharp, and fearless Eye.

Yet here, as morning takes in her young hands  
The lilies, and to gild her coloured bands  
Desires those sunny flashes from the swim  
Of naiad-ripples over the warm sands,  
Or where the wave looks cherry-ripe or blue  
In its fair answer to the flowery shore,  
An eye peers through  
The willow-lattice, capturing much more  
My fancy; while on that green farther ledge  
The gray mare bites the alder and cool sedge,  
This eye across the wide clear river burns,  
And in the rosy glass of bloom discerns.  
Then sapphire lightning falls, the waters burst,  
The lightning leaps reversed,  
And with his eye's quick distant prize  
The kingfisher returns.



## *WAR: IMPACTS AND DELAYED ACTIONS*



## *A House in Festubert*

WITH blind eyes meeting the mist and moon  
And yet with blossoming trees robed round,  
With gashes black, nay, one great wound,  
Amazing still it stands its ground;  
Sad soul, here stay you.

It held, one time, such happy hours,  
Its tables shone with smiles and filled  
The hungry—Home! 'twas theirs, is ours,  
We house it here and laugh unkilld.  
Hoarse gun, now, pray you—

It knew the hand and voice of Sleep,  
Sleep was its friend and nightly came,  
And still the bony laths would keep  
One friendship, but poor Sleep's gone lame.  
O poisoner, Mahu!

A hermit might have built a cell  
Among those evergreens, beside  
That mellow wall: they serve as well  
For four lean guns. Soft, hermits, hide,  
Lest pride display you.

It hived the bird's call, the bee's hum,  
The sunbeams crossing the garden's shade—  
So fond of summer! still they come,  
But steel-born bees, birds, beams invade.  
—Could summer betray you?

## *The Sentry's Mistake*

THE chapel at the crossways bore no scar,  
Nor near had whining covey of shells yet pounced,

The calm saints in the chapel knew no war,  
No meaning there the horizon's roars announced;  
We halted, and were glad; the country lay  
After our marching like a sabbath day.

Round the still quadrangle of the great farm  
The company soon had settled their new home;  
The cherry-boughs were beckoning every arm,  
The stream ran wrinkling by with playful foam,  
And when the guard was at the gateway set,  
Surrounding pastoral sweetly stole their wit.

So out upon the road, gamekeeper-like,  
The cowman now turned warrior measured out  
His up-and-down sans cursed bundook and spike,  
Under his arm a cudgel brown and stout;  
An air of comfort and kind ownership,  
A philosophic smile upon his lip.

For it seemed sin to soil the harmonious air  
With the parade of weapons built to kill.  
But now a flagged car came ill-omened there.  
The crimson-mottled monarch, shocked and shrill,  
Sent our poor sentry scampering for his gun,  
Made him once more "the terror of the Hun."

## *Illusions*

TRENCHES in the moonlight, in the lulling moonlight  
Have had their loveliness; when dancing dewy grasses  
Caressed us passing along their earthy lanes;  
When the crucifix hanging over was strangely illumined,  
And one imagined music, one even heard the brave bird  
In the sighing orchards flute above the weedy well.  
There are such moments; forgive me that I note them,  
Nor gloze that there comes soon the nemesis of beauty,  
In the fluttering relics that at first glimmer awakened

Terror—the no-man’s ditch suddenly forking:  
There, the enemy’s best with bombs and brains and courage!  
—Softly, swiftly, at once be animal and angel—  
But O no, no, they’re Death’s malkins dangling in the wire  
For the moon’s interpretation.

## *Two Voices*

“THERE’s something in the air,” he said  
In the large parlour cool and bare;  
The plain words in his hearers bred  
A tumult, yet in silence there  
All waited; wryly gay, he left the phrase,  
Ordered the march and bade us go our ways.

“We’re going South, man”; as he spoke  
The howitzer with huge ping-bang  
Racked the light hut; as thus he broke  
The death-news, bright the skylarks sang;  
He took his riding-crop and humming went  
Among the apple-trees all bloom and scent.

Now far withdraws the roaring night  
Which wrecked our flower after the first  
Of those two voices; misty light  
Shrouds Thiepval Wood and all its worst:  
But still “There’s something in the air” I hear,  
And still “We’re going South, man,” deadly near.

## *Premature Rejoicing*

WHAT’S that over there?  
Thiepval Wood.  
Take a steady look at it; it’ll do you good.  
Here, these glasses will help you. See any flowers?

There sleeps Titania (correct—the Wood is ours);  
 There sleeps Titania in a deep dugout,  
 Waking, she wonders what all the din's about,  
 And smiles through her tears, and looks ahead ten years,  
 And sees her Wood again, and her usual Grenadiers,  
     All in green,  
     Music in the moon;  
 The burnt rubbish you've just seen  
 Won't beat the Fairy Queen;  
     All the same, it's a shade too soon  
     For you to scribble rhymes  
     In your army book  
     About those times;  
     Take another look;  
 That's where the difficulty is, over there.

## *Escape*

*A Colonel:*

THERE are four officers, this message says,  
 Lying all dead at Mesnil.  
 One shell pitched clean amongst 'em at the foot  
 Of Jacob's Ladder. They're all Sussex men.  
 I fear poor Flood and Warne were of that party.  
 And the Brigade wants them identified . . .

*A Mind.*

Now God befriend me,  
 The next word not send me  
 To view those ravished trunks  
 And hips and blackened hunks.

*A Colonel:*

No, not you, Bunny, you've just now come down.  
 I've something else for you.

Orderly!

(Sir!)

Find Mr. Wrestman.

## *Preparations for Victory*

My soul, dread not the pestilence that hags  
The valley; flinch not you, my body young,  
At these great shouting smokes and snarling jags  
Of fiery iron; as yet may not be flung  
The dice that claims you: Manly move among  
These ruins, and what you must do, do well;  
Look, here are gardens, there mossed boughs are hung  
With apples whose bright cheeks none might excel,  
And there's a house as yet unshattered by a shell.

"I'll do my best," the soul makes sad reply,  
"And I will mark the yet unmurdered tree,  
The relics of dear homes that court the eye,  
And yet I see them not as I would see.  
Hovering between, a ghostly enemy  
Sickens the light, and poisoned, withered, wan,  
The least defiled turns desperate to me."  
The body, poor unpitied Caliban,  
Parches and sweats and grunts to win the name of Man.

Days or eternities like swelling waves  
Surge on, and still we drudge in this dark maze,  
The bombs and coils and cans by strings of slaves  
Are borne to serve the coming day of days;  
Pale sleep in slimy cellars scarce allays  
With its brief blank the burden. Look, we lose;  
The sky is gone, the lightless drenching haze  
Of rainstorm chills the bone; earth, air are foes,  
The black fiend leaps brick-red as life's last picture goes.

## *Zero*

O ROSY red, O torrent splendour  
Staining all the Orient gloom,

O celestial work of wonder—  
A million mornings in one bloom!

What, does the artist of creation  
Try some new plethora of flame,  
For his eye's fresh fascination?  
Has the old cosmic fire grown tame?

In what subnatural strange awaking  
Is this body, which seems mine?  
These feet towards that blood-burst making,  
These ears which thunder, these hands which twine

On grotesque iron? Icy-clear  
The air of a mortal day shocks sense,  
My shaking men pant after me here.  
The acid vapours hovering dense,

The fury whizzing in dozens down,  
The clattering rafters, clods calcined,  
The blood in the flints and the trackway brown—  
I see I am clothed and in my right mind;

The dawn but hangs behind the goal.  
What is that artist's joy to me?  
Here limps poor Jock with a gash in the poll,  
His red blood now is the red I see,

The swooning white of him, and that red!  
These bombs in boxes, the craunch of shells,  
The second-hand flitting round; ahead!  
It's plain we were born for this, naught else.

### *At Senlis Once*

O how comely it was and how reviving,  
When with clay and with death no longer striving



Down firm roads we came to houses  
With women chattering and green grass thriving.

Now though rains in a cataract descended,  
We could glow, with our tribulation ended—  
Count not days, the present only  
Was thought of, how could it ever be expended?

Clad so cleanly, this remnant of poor wretches  
Picked up life like the hens in orchard ditches,  
Gazed on the mill-sails, heard the church-bell,  
Found an honest glass all manner of riches.

How they crowded the barn with lusty laughter,  
Hailed the pierrots and shook each shadowy rafter,  
Even could ridicule their own sufferings,  
Sang as though nothing but joy came after!

### *Into the Salient*

SALLOWS like heads in Polynesia,  
With few and blood-stuck hairs,  
Mud-layered cobble-stones,  
Soldiers in smoky sheds, blackening uniforms and walls with their  
cooking;  
Shell-holes in roofs, in roads,  
Even in advertisements  
Of bicycles and beer;  
The Middle Ages gone to sleep, and woken up to this—  
A salvo, four flat slamming explosions.  
When you come out the wrong side of the ruin, you are facing Hill  
Sixty,  
Hill Sixty is facing you.  
You have been planted on the rim of a volcano,  
Which will bring forth its fruit—at any second.

Better to be shielded from these facts;  
There is a cellar, or was just now.  
If the wreck isn't knocked in on us all,  
We may emerge past the two Belgian policemen,  
The owners' representatives,  
Standing in their capes on the steps of the hollow estaminet  
Open at all hours to all the winds  
At the Poperinghe end of Ypres.  
O if we do, if time will pass in time,  
We will march  
With rifles butt-upwards, in our teeth, any way you like,  
Into seven days of country where you come out any door.

## *The Zonnebeke Road*

MORNING, if this late withered light can claim  
Some kindred with that merry flame  
Which the young day was wont to fling through space!  
Agony stares from each gray face.  
And yet the day is come; stand down! stand down!  
Your hands unclasp from rifles while you can,  
The frost has pierced them to the bended bone?  
Why, see old Stevens there, that iron man,  
Melting the ice to shave his grotesque chin:  
Go ask him, shall we win?  
I never liked this bay, some foolish fear  
Caught me the first time that I came in here;  
That dugout fallen in awakes, perhaps,  
Some formless haunting of some corpse's chaps.  
True, and wherever we have held the line,  
There were such corners, seeming-saturnine  
For no good cause.

Now where Haymarket starts,  
That is no place for soldiers with weak hearts;  
The minenwerfers have it to the inch.

Look, how the snow-dust whisks along the road,  
Piteous and silly; the stones themselves must flinch  
In this east wind; the low sky like a load  
Hangs over—a dead-weight. But what a pain  
Must gnaw where its clay cheek  
Crushes the shell-chopped trees that fang the plain—  
The ice-bound throat gulps out a gargoyle shriek.  
The wretched wire before the village line  
Rattles like rusty brambles or dead bine,  
And then the daylight oozes into dun;  
Black pillars, those are trees where roadways run.  
Even Ypres now would warm our souls; fond fool,  
Our tour's but one night old, seven more to cool!  
O screaming dumbness, O dull clashing death,  
Shreds of dead grass and willows, homes and men,  
Watch as you will, men clench their chattering teeth  
And freeze you back with that one hope, disdain.

### *Trench Raid near Hooge*

At an hour before the rosy-fingered  
Morning should come  
To wonder again what meant these sties,  
These wailing shots, these glaring eyes,  
These moping mum,

Through the black reached strange long rosy fingers  
All at one aim  
Protending, and bending: down they swept,  
Successions of similars after leapt  
And bore red flame

To one small ground of the eastern distance,  
And thunderous touched.  
East then and west false dawns fan-flashed  
And shut, and gaped; false thunders clashed.  
Who stood and watched

Caught piercing horror from the desperate pit  
Which with ten men  
Was centre of this. The blood burnt, feeling  
The fierce truth there and the last appealing,  
"Us? Us? Again?"

Nor rosy dawn at last appearing  
Through the icy shade  
Might mark without trembling the new deforming  
Of earth that had seemed past further storming.  
Her fingers played,

One thought, with something of human pity  
On six or seven  
Whose looks were hard to understand,  
But that they ceased to care what hand  
Lit earth and heaven.

### *Concert Party: Busseboom*

THE stage was set, the house was packed,  
The famous troop began;  
Our laughter thundered, act by act;  
Time light as sunbeams ran.

Dance sprang and spun and neared and fled,  
Jest chirped at gayest pitch,  
Rhythm dazzled, action sped  
Most comically rich.

With generals and lame privates both  
Such charms worked wonders, till  
The show was over—lagging loth  
We faced the sunset chill;

And standing on the sandy way,  
With the cracked church peering past,

We heard another matinée,  
We heard the maniac blast

Of barrage south by Saint Eloi,  
And the red lights flaming there  
Called madness: Come, my bonny boy,  
And dance to the latest air.

To this new concert, white we stood;  
Cold certainty held our breath;  
While men in the tunnels below Larch Wood  
Were kicking men to death.

### *Rural Economy (1917)*

THERE was winter in those woods,  
And still it was July:  
There were Thule solitudes  
With thousands huddling nigh;  
There the fox had left his den,  
The scraped holes hid not stoats but men.

To these woods the rumour teemed  
Of peace five miles away;  
In sight, hills hovered, houses gleamed  
Where last perhaps we lay  
Till the cockerels bawled bright morning and  
The hours of life slipped the slack hand.

In sight, life's farms sent forth their gear;  
Here rakes and ploughs lay still;  
Yet, save some curious clods, all here  
Was raked and ploughed with a will.  
The sower was the ploughman too,  
And iron seeds broadcast he threw.

What husbandry could outdo this?  
With flesh and blood he fed  
The planted iron that nought amiss  
Grew thick and swift and red,  
And in a night though ne'er so cold  
Those acres bristled a hundredfold.

Why, even the wood as well as field  
This ruseful farmer knew  
Could be reduced to plough and tilled,  
And if he planned, he'd do;  
The field and wood, all bone-fed loam,  
Shot up a roaring harvest-home.

### *Battalion in Rest*

SOME found an owl's nest in the hollow skull  
Of the first pollard from the malthouse wall;  
Some hurried through the swarming sedge  
About the ballast-pond's bright edge,  
And flashed through sunny deeps like boys from school;  
All was discovery, love and laughter all.

The girls along the dykes of those moist miles  
Went on raft boats to take their cows afield,  
And eyes from many an English farm  
Saw and owned the mode had charm;  
One well might mark the silence and the smiles;  
With such sweet balms, our wounds must soon be healed.

The jovial sun sprang up as bright each day  
As fancy's sun could be, and climbed, heaven's youth,  
To make the marching mornings cheat  
Still-hectoring Mars of his receipt—  
Who cannot hear the songs that led the way,  
See the trim companies with their eyes on truth?

At evening, by the lonely white-walled house,  
Where Que-C'est-Drôle and Mon-Dieu stole to glance,  
One bold platoon all turned to players  
With masquerade and strumming airs;  
The short clown darted nimble as a mouse,  
The tambourine tapped out the stiff-stepped dance.

A shadowed corner suddenly found voice  
As in the dusk I passed; it bade me stay.  
The bottle to my lips was raised—  
God help us, Serjeant, I was mazed  
By that sharp fire your wine—but I rejoice!  
Could I but meet you again at the end o' the day!

Not seldom, soft by meadows deep in dew,  
Another lit my soul with his calm shine.  
There were cadences and whispers  
In his ways that made my vespers—  
A night-piece fitting well that temple blue  
Where stars new trembled with delight's design.

### *E. W. T. : on the death of his Betty*

AND she is gone, whom, dream or truth,  
You lived for in this wreck of youth,  
And on your brow sits age,  
Who's quickly won his siege.

My friend, you will not wish a word  
Of striven help in this worst gird  
Of fortune as she gets  
From us our race's debts.

I see you with this subtlest blow  
Like a stunned man softly go;  
Then you, love-baffled boy,  
Smile with a mournful joy.

Thereat I read, you plainly know  
The time draws near when the fierce foe  
Shall your poor body tear  
And mix with mud and air.

Your smile is borne in that foredoom,  
Beaten, you see your victory bloom,  
And fortune cheats her end,  
And death draws nigh, a friend.

*Vlamertinghe: Passing the Chateau,  
July 1917*

"AND all her silken flanks with garlands drest"—  
But we are coming to the sacrifice.  
Must those have flowers who are not yet gone West?  
May those have flowers who live with death and lice?  
This must be the floweriest place  
That earth allows; the queenly face  
Of the proud mansion borrows grace for grace  
Spite of those brute guns lowing at the skies.

Bold great daisies, golden lights,  
Bubbling roses' pinks and whites—  
Such a gay carpet! poppies by the million;  
Such damask! such vermillion!  
But if you ask me, mate, the choice of colour  
Is scarcely right; this red should have been much duller.

*Third Ypres*

Triumph! How strange, how strong had triumph come  
On weary hate of foul and endless war  
When from its grey gravecloths awoke anew  
The summer day. Among the tumbled wreck



Of fascinated lines and mounds the light was peering,  
Half-smiling upon us, and our newfound pride;  
The terror of the waiting night outlived,  
The time too crowded for the heart to count  
All the sharp cost in friends killed on the assault.  
No hook of all the octopus had held us,  
Here stood we trampling down the ancient tyrant.  
So shouting dug we among the monstrous pits.

Amazing quiet fell upon the waste,  
Quiet intolerable to those who felt  
The hurrying batteries beyond the masking hills  
For their new parley setting themselves in array  
In crafty fourms unmapped.

No, these, smiled faith,  
Are dumb for the reason of their overthrow.  
They move not back, they lie among the crews  
Twisted and choked, they'll never speak again.  
Only the copse where once might stand a shrine  
Still clacked and suddenly hissed its bullets by.  
The War would end, the Line was on the move,  
And at a bound the impassable was passed.  
We lay and waited with extravagant joy.

Now dulls the day and chills; comes there no word  
From those who swept through our new lines to flood  
The lines beyond? but little comes, and so  
Sure as a runner time himself's accosted.  
And the slow moments shake their heavy heads,  
And croak, "They're done, they'll none of them get through,  
They're done, they've all died on the entanglements,  
The wire stood up like an unplashed hedge and thorned  
With giant spikes—and there they've paid the bill."

Then comes the black assurance, then the sky's  
Mute misery lapses into trickling rain,  
That wreathes and swims and soon shuts in our world.  
And those distorted guns, that lay past use,  
Why—miracles not over!—all a-firing!

The rain's no cloak from their sharp eyes. And you,  
Poor signaller, you I passed by this emplacement,  
You whom I warned, poor daredevil, waving your flags,  
Amid this screeching I pass you again and shudder  
At the lean green flies upon the red flesh madding.  
Runner, stand by a second. Your message.—He's gone,  
Falls on a knee, and his right hand uplifted  
Claws his last message from his ghostly enemy,  
Turns stone-like. Well I liked him, that young runner,  
But there's no time for that. O now for the word  
To order us flash from these drowning roaring traps  
And even hurl upon that snarling wire?  
Why are our guns so impotent?

The grey rain,

Steady as the sand in an hourglass on this day,  
Where through the window the red lilac looks,  
And all's so still, the chair's odd click is noise—  
The rain is all heaven's answer, and with hearts  
Past reckoning we are carried into night  
And even sleep is nodding here and there.

The second night steals through the shrouding rain.  
We in our numb thought crouching long have lost  
The mockery triumph, and in every runner  
Have urged the mind's eye see the triumph to come,  
The sweet relief, the straggling out of hell  
Into whatever burrows may be given  
For life's recall. Then the fierce destiny speaks.  
This was the calm, we shall look back for this.  
The hour is come; come, move to the relief!  
Dizzy we pass the mule-strewn track where once  
The ploughman whistled as he loosed his team;  
And where he turned home-hungry on the road,  
The leaning pollard marks us hungrier turning,  
We crawl to save the remnant who have torn  
Back from the tentacled wire, those whom no shell  
Has charred into black carcasses—Relief!  
They grate their teeth until we take their room,  
And through the churn of moonless night and mud

And flaming burst and sour gas we are huddled  
Into the ditches where they bawl sense awake  
And in a frenzy that none could reason calm,  
(Whimpering some, and calling on the dead)  
They turn away: as in a dream they find  
Strength in their feet to bear back that strange whim  
Their body.

At the noon of the dreadful day  
Our trench and death's is on a sudden stormed  
With huge and shattering salvoes, the clay dances  
In founts of clods around the concrete sties,  
Where still the brain devises some last armour  
To live out the poor limbs.

This wrath's oncoming  
Found four of us together in a pillbox,  
Skirting the abyss of madness with light phrases,  
White and blinking, in false smiles grimacing.  
The demon grins to see the game, a moment  
Passes, and—still the drum-tap dongs my brain  
To a whirring void—through the great breach above me  
The light comes in with icy shock and the rain  
Horridly drops. Doctor, talk, talk! if dead  
Or stunned I know not; the stinking powdered concrete,  
The lyddite turns me sick—my hair's all full  
Of this smashed concrete. O I'll drag you, friends,  
Out of the sepulchre into the light of day,  
For this is day, the pure and sacred day.  
And while I squeak and gibber over you,  
Look, from the wreck a score of field-mice nimble,  
And tame and curious look about them; (these  
Calmed me, on these depended my salvation).

There comes my sergeant, and by all the powers  
The wire is holding to the right battalion,  
And I can speak—but I myself first spoken  
Hear a known voice now measured even to madness  
Call me by name.

“For God's sake send and help us,  
Here in a gunpit, all headquarters done for,

Forty or more, the nine-inch came right through,  
All splashed with arms and legs, and I myself  
The only one not killed, not even wounded.  
You'll send—God bless you!" The more monstrous fate  
Shadows our own, the mind swoons doubly burdened,  
Taught how for miles our anguish groans and bleeds,  
A whole sweet countryside amuck with murder;  
Each moment puffed into a year with death.  
Still swept the rain, roared guns,  
Still swooped into the swamps of flesh and blood,  
All to the drabness of uncreation sunk,  
And all thought dwindled to a moan, Relieve!  
But who with what command can now relieve  
The dead men from that chaos, or my soul?

### *The Welcome*

He'd scarcely come from leave and London,  
Still was carrying a leather case,  
When he surprised Headquarters pillbox  
And sat down sweating in the filthy place.

He was a tall, lean, pale-looking creature,  
With nerves that seldom ceased to wince,  
Past war had long preyed on his nature,  
And war had doubled in horror since.

There was a lull, the adjutant even  
Came to my hole: You cheerful sinner,  
If nothing happens till half-past seven,  
Come over then, we're going to have dinner.

Back he went with his fierce red head;  
We were sourly canvassing his jauntiness, when  
Something happened at headquarters pillbox.  
"Don't go there," cried one of my men.

The shell had struck right into the doorway,  
The smoke lazily floated away;  
There were six men in that concrete doorway,  
Now a black muckheap blocked the way.

Inside, one who had, scarcely shaken  
The air of England, out of his lungs  
Was alive, and sane; it shall be spoken  
While any of those who were there have tongues.

### *Pillbox*

JUST see what's happening, Worley!—Worley rose  
And round the angled doorway thrust his nose  
And Serjeant Hoad went too to snuff the air.  
Then war brought down his fist, and missed the pair!  
Yet Hoad was scratched by a splinter, the blood came,  
And out burst terrors that he'd striven to tame,  
A good man, Hoad, for weeks. *I'm blown to bits*,  
He groans, he screams. *Come, Bluffer, where's your wits?*  
Says Worley, *Bluffer, you've a blighty, man!*  
All in the pillbox urged him, here began  
His freedom: *Think of Eastbourne and your dad.*  
The poor man lay at length and brief and mad  
Flung out his cry of doom; soon ebbed and dumb  
He yielded. Worley with a tot of rum  
And shouting in his face could not restore him.  
The ship of Charon over channel bore him.  
All marvelled even on that most deathly day  
To see this life so spirited away.

### *Gouzeaucourt: The Deceitful Calm*

How unpurposed, how inconsequential  
Seemed those southern lines when in the pallor  
Of the dying winter  
First we went there!

Grass thin-waving in the wind approached them,  
Red roofs in the near view feigned survival,  
Lovely mockers, when we  
There took over.

There war's holiday seemed, nor though at known times  
Gusts of flame and jingling steel descended  
On the bare tracks, would you  
Picture death there.

Snow or rime-frost made a solemn silence,  
Bluish darkness wrapped in dangerous safety;  
Old hands thought of tidy  
Living-trenches!

There it was, my dears, that I departed,  
Scarce a plainer traitor ever! There too  
Many of you soon paid for  
That false mildness.

## *The Prophet*

It is a country,  
Says this old guide-book to the Netherlands,  
—Written when Waterloo was hardly over,  
And justified “a warmer interest  
In English travellers”—Flanders is a country  
Which, boasting not “so many natural beauties”  
As others, yet has history enough.  
I like the book; it flaunts the polished phrase  
Which our forefathers practised equally  
To bury admirals or sell beaver hats;  
Let me go on, and note you here and there  
Words with a difference to the likes of us.  
The author “will not dwell on the temptations  
Which many parts of Belgium offer”; he  
“Will not insist on the salubrity

Of the air." I thank you, sir, for those few words.  
With which we find ourselves in sympathy.  
And here are others: "here the unrivalled skill  
Of British generals, and the British soldier's  
Unconquerable valour . . . " no, not us.  
Proceed.

"The necessary cautions on the road" . . .

Gas helmets at the alert, no daylight movement?

"But lately much attention has been paid

To the coal mines." Amen, roars many a fosse

Down south, and slag-heap unto slag-heap calls.

"The Flemish farmers are likewise distinguished

For their attention to manure." Perchance.

First make your mixen, then about it raise

Your tenements; let the house and sheds and sties

And arch triumphal opening on the mud

Inclose that Mecca in a square. The fields,

Our witness saith, are for the most part small,

And "leases are unfortunately short."

In this again perceive veracity;

At Zillebeke the cultivator found

That it was so; and Fritz, who thought to settle

Down by Verbrandenmolen, came with spades,

And dropped his spades, and ran more dead than alive.

Nor, to disclose a secret, do I languish

For lack of a long lease on Pilkem Ridge.

While in these local hints, I cannot wait

But track the author on familiar ground.

He comes from Menin, names the village names

That since rang round the world, leaves Zillebeke,

Crosses a river (so he calls that blood-leat

Bassevillebeek), a hill (a hideous hill),

And reaches Ypres, "pleasant, well-built town."

My Belgian Traveller, did no threatening whisper

Sigh to you from the hid profound of fate

Ere you passed thence, and noted "Poperinghe.

Traffic in serge and hops"? (The words might still

Convey sound fact. Perhaps some dim hush envoy

Entered your spirit when at Furnes you wrote,  
"The air is reckoned unhealthy here for strangers."  
I find your pen, as driven by irony's fingers,  
Defend the incorrectness of your map  
With this: it was not fitting to delay,  
Though "in a few weeks-a new treaty of Paris  
Would render it useless." Good calm worthy man,  
I leave you changing horses, and I wish you  
Good *blanc* at Nieuport.—Truth did not disdain  
This sometime seer, crass but Cassandra-like.

## *An Infantryman*

PAINFULLY writhed the few last weeds upon those houseless  
uplands,  
Cleft pods had dropt their blackened seeds into the trampled  
clay,  
Wind and rain were running loose, and icy flew the whiplash;  
Masked guns like autumn thunder drummed the outcast  
year away.

Hidden a hundred yards ahead with winter's blinding passion,  
The mule-beat track appeared half dead, even war's hot blood  
congealed;  
The half-dug trenches brimmed like troughs, the camps lay  
slushed and empty,  
Unless those bitter whistlings proved Death's army in the  
field.

Over the captured ridge above the hurt battalion waited,  
And hardly had sense left to prove if ghost or living passed  
From hole to hole with sunken eyes and slow ironic orders,  
While fiery fountains burst and clanged—and there your lot  
was cast.



Yet I saw your health and youth go brightening to the vortex,  
The ghosts on guard, the storm uncouth were then no  
match for you;  
You smiled, you sang, your courage rang, and to this day I hear it,  
Sunny as a May-day dance, along that spectral avenue.

### *Reunion in War*

THE windmill in his smock of white  
Stared from his little crest,  
Like a slow smoke was the moonlight  
As I went like one possessed

Where the glebe path makes shortest way;  
The stammering wicket swung.  
I passed amid the crosses grey  
Where opiate yew-boughs hung.

The bleached grass shuddered into sighs,  
The dogs that knew this moon  
Far up were harrying sheep, the cries  
Of hunting owls went on.

And I among the dead made haste  
And over flat vault stones  
Set in the path unheeding paced  
Nor thought of those chill bones.

Thus to my sweetheart's cottage I,  
Who long had been away,  
Turned as the traveller turns adry  
To brooks to moist his clay.

Her cottage stood like a dream, so clear  
And yet so dark; and now  
I thought to find my more than dear  
And if she'd kept her vow.

Old house-dog from his barrel came  
Without a voice, and knew  
And licked my hand; all seemed the same  
To the moonlight and the dew.

By the white damson then I took  
The tallest osier wand  
And thrice upon her casement strook,  
And she, so fair, so fond,

Looked out, and saw in wild delight,  
And tiptoed down to me,  
And cried in silent joy that night  
Beside the bullace tree.

O cruel time to take away,  
Or worse to bring agen;  
Why slept not I in Flanders clay  
With all the murdered men?

For I had changed, or she had changed,  
Though true loves both had been,  
Even while we kissed we stood estranged  
With the ghosts of war between.

We had not met but a moment ere  
War baffled joy, and cried,  
"Love's but a madness, a burnt flare;  
The shell's a madman's bride."

The cottage stood, poor stone and wood,  
Poorer than stone stood I;  
Then from her kind arms moved in a mood  
As grey as the cereclothed sky.

The roosts were stirred, each little bird  
Called fearfully out for day;  
The church clock with his dead voice whirred  
As if he bade me stay

To trace with foolish fingers all  
The letters on the stones  
Where thick beneath the twitch roots crawl  
In dead men's envied bones.

### *A Farm near Zillebeke*

BLACK clouds hide the moon, the amazement is gone;  
The morning will come in weeping and rain;  
The Line is all hushed—on a sudden anon  
The fool bullets clack and guns mouth again.  
I stood in the yard of a house that must die,  
And still the black hame was stacked by the door,  
And harness still hung there, and the dray waited by.

Black clouds hid the moon, tears blinded me more.

### *1916 seen from 1921*

TIRED with dull grief, grown old before my day,  
I sit in solitude and only hear  
Long silent laughs, murmurings of dismay,  
The lost intensities of hope and fear;  
In those old marshes yet the rifles lie,  
On the thin breastwork flutter the grey rags,  
The very books I read are there—and I  
Dead as the men I loved, wait while life drags

Its wounded length from those sad streets of war  
Into green places here, that were my own;  
But now what once was mine is mine no more,  
I seek such neighbours here and I find none.  
With such strong gentleness and tireless will  
Those ruined houses seared themselves in me,  
Passionate I look for their dumb story still,  
And the charred stub outspeaks the living tree.

I rise up at the singing of a bird  
And scarcely knowing slink along the lane,  
I dare not give a soul a look or word  
Where all have homes and none's at home in vain:  
Deep red the rose burned in the grim redoubt,  
The self-sown wheat around was like a flood,  
In the hot path the lizard lolled time out,  
The saints in broken shrines were bright as blood.

Sweet Mary's shrine between the sycamores!  
There we would go, my friend of friends and I,  
And snatch long moments from the grudging wars,  
Whose dark made light intense to see them by.  
Shrewd bit the morning fog, the whining shots  
Spun from the wrangling wire; then in warm swoon  
The sun hushed all but the cool orchard plots,  
We crept in the tall grass and slept till noon.

### *The Troubled Spirit*

SAID God, Go, spirit, thou hast served me well  
In these our palaces, and choose out one star  
Of all the universe beneath us lies,  
And see what other beauty I have made.  
So spoke the Almighty, in whose eyes there burned  
A dimmer light, and whose bowed head revealed  
Some weariness: while Time smiled to himself.

Now takes the spirit thought, whether to search  
The rosy fires of suns innumerable  
That seem not to have rest even for a spirit,  
Or to some tinier satellite to fly  
And kindlier radiance beckoning.

Thus comes he  
To earth, and sees the restless water curve  
Round lands wherefrom a rumour smokes, scarce loud  
As the voices of the waters, and there seems

In these lands but a quiet interchange  
Of music, jarred, yet nigh to full concent.  
So comes the spirit.

And now, passing among  
The moving multitude, he sees how most  
Are strong and lusty in their generation,  
And though their countenance to their fellows yield  
Small comfort, yet the most seem in themselves  
To find all that this world might ever give.  
The ringing cities shine in the morning light  
And in the evening glitter unafraid,  
The beasts are droved to furnish their proud tables.  
The deeps yield up their mystery for their need.

Over the green fields, over the silver waters  
Goes the good spirit, and earth's willing plenty  
Warms him to rapture, while the zeal and power  
Of busy man, thinks he, is the bright flower  
Of all besides; nay even the songs of heaven  
Scarce seem so brave, and though death takes his toll,  
The strong still flourish, and the grief's soon past.

But now the poursuivant, making swift way,  
Happy as swallows in the blue calm air,  
While the rich harvest glows and the hives rejoice,  
Espies a wilderness where little's green,  
And the land clawed as by great dragon's pounces  
Yet dumb, dun, mournful lieth by itself,  
With wounds ten thousand times ten thousand writhed.

Over this golgotha poising like a kestrel  
He stares, he wonders—here the very quiet  
Is a vast hubbub, here the sun's uprising  
Is the annihilation of night's mercy,  
The fallen jaw grins, the eyes are glazed with foulness.  
O Spirit, fly thy swiftest!

Pondering deep  
He leaves the brown waste far away, he comes

To a white village peeping through its elms.  
There he stoops down and in a coppice rests.

The twilight now bids timid hares come forth  
And play like children in the woodside corn,  
Hot youth flings by, and age as bold though slow,  
But one there trembling comes where rests the spirit,  
And stands half silent, as for very shame  
To himself muttering. Yet the spirit looks  
And sees his eyes as eyes set earnestly  
On some one listening and of one mind with him.

Where the soul's uttered, though the words be halt,  
They are a language understood in heaven,  
And thus the spirit, now first listening close,  
Hears not unwitting.

“Like a ghost am I,  
Having no part in common day or joy,  
Young, and yet older than the oldest men.  
There's none to understand though some may love.  
Nay, those might understand would shun to open  
Their heart, but bind old memories as with chains.

Has summer come? and has she passed her noon?  
How once I told myself of summer coming  
When I'd amaze myself with every minute  
From the first thrill of day till midnight hawks  
Laughed bedlam down the hedge—if I should live  
To see those magic summers. And I live;  
But now the moss upon the churchyard stone  
Has felt the radiance with a joy not mine,  
And summer seems a rumour in the past.

So high flamed life when death was gesturing by,  
So faint burns now. A day of that gone age  
Was more than all the days that now shall come.  
Then friendship was, that mightier grew than love.  
Why are you fallen, friend after friend? for these

Lie now lapt in their silence and the clay  
Whose stubborn hatred they so often fought,  
And these are scattered listless and estranged.  
All climbed the summits of the immense, all learned  
The secrets of the tempest and the dawn,  
In Zara desert now all bleach or crawl.

But come you, friends, let necromantic thought  
Be our reunion; find we our old selves  
And our old haunts, half-stricken towns that dare  
Keep mirth alive, old cellars and rare sleep,  
Lines where glad poppies burn or pollards stalk,  
And terror broods not greater than we can bear,  
Sleep's double sweet, wit twice as precious there.  
And there joy triumphs, from such danger snatcht,  
And there we'll sit and make our sad selves merry,  
Nor reckon up to-morrow and its fate;  
Enjoy the franchise of wild-running nature,  
Nor prophesy to-morrow's maniac battle.  
*Fine merry franions———"*

Tears no words can tell  
Fall now; the spirit goes abroad attuned  
To this wild mood, and hears it from all sides,  
And musing with a dimness on his brow  
The wreck of earth, the soul's worse solitude,  
Returns to heaven, is stationed by the throne,  
And now first sees how the bowed head reveals  
Some weariness, while Time smiles to himself.

### *The Late Stand-to*

I THOUGHT of cottages nigh brooks  
Whose aspens loved to shine and swirl,  
Of chubby babies' wondering looks  
Above the doorboards, and the girl  
Who blossomed like the morning sky,  
With clear light like a lily made;

She dipt her bucket and went by,  
Where bright the unwithering water played.

No water ever ran so blithe  
As that same mill-tail stream, I'd say,  
And life as laughing danced as lithe  
And twinkled on as many a day.  
The wonder seemed that summer waned,  
So full it filled the giant sphere,  
But skulls chill on where warm blood reigned  
And even such summers must grow sere.

I heard the bell brag on the west  
And whisper on the eastern wind,  
And hated how it found the nest  
That Time was never meant to find:  
Through many an afternoon blue-hung  
Like sultry smoke with drowsy heat  
There came the bell-cote's scheming tongue  
Till gipsy-boys that slouched down street

With roach on withy rods impaled  
Had flown, and swallows met to fly,  
And yellow light and leaves prevailed  
And trouble roved the evening sky.  
But spite of ghosts who shook their hair  
In clouds and stalked through darker plains,  
Still to the wood bridge I'd repair  
Ere autumn palsied into rains.

The fish turned over in the shoal,  
A flash of summer! then came she,  
Who when green leaves were lapping cool  
So like a lily dazzled me;  
Her basketful of mushrooms got,  
She passed, she called me by my name,  
And now whole myriads are forgot  
But kindly Nell will seem the same



Down to my death! Long tarry, Sun,  
That shone upon us two that day,  
And autumn's honey breath live on  
The last sighed air that leaves me clay!—  
Clay! clay! the packing bullets mocked  
And split the breastwork by my head,  
And into aching senses shocked  
I gave Stand-To! the east was red.

## *War Autobiography*

WRITTEN IN ILLNESS

HEAVEN is clouded, mists of rain  
Stream with idle motion by;  
Like a tide the trees' refrain  
Wearies me where pale I lie,  
Thinking of sunny times that were  
Even in shattered Festubert;  
Stubborn joys that blossomed on  
When the small golden god was gone

Who tiptoe on his spire surveyed  
Yser north from Ypres creeping,  
And, how many a sunset! made  
A longed-for glory amid the weeping.  
In how many a valley of death  
Some trifling thing has given me breath,  
And when the bat-like wings brushed by  
What steady stars smiled in the sky!

War might make his worst grimace,  
And still my mind in armour good  
Turned aside in every place  
And saw bright day through the black wood:  
There the lyddite vapoured foul,

But there I got myself a rose;  
By the shrapnelled lock I'd prowled  
To see below the proud pike doze.

Like the first light ever streamed  
New and lively past all telling,  
When I dreamed of joy I dreamed,  
The more oppress the more rebelling;  
Trees ne'er shone so lusty green  
As those in Hamel valley, eyes  
Did never such right friendship mean  
As his who loved my enterprise.

Thus the child was born again  
In the youth, the toga's care  
Flung aside—desired, found vain,  
And sharp as ichor grew the air:  
But the hours passed and evermore  
Harsher screamed the condor war,  
The last green tree was scourged to nothing,  
The stream's decay left senses loathing,

The eyes that had been strength so long  
Gone, or blind, or lapt in clay,  
And war grown twenty times as strong  
As when I held him first at bay;  
Then down and down I sunk from joy  
To shrivelled age, though scarce a boy,  
And knew for all my fear to die  
That I with those lost friends should lie.

Now in slow imprisoned pain  
Lie I in the garret bed,  
With this cramped and weighted brain  
That scarce has power to wish me fled  
To burst the vault and soar away  
Into the apocalypse of day,  
And so regain that tingling light  
That twice has passed before my sight.

*11th R.S.R.*

How bright a dove's wing shows against the sky  
When thunder's blackening up in monstrous cloud;  
How silver clear against war's hue and cry  
Each syllable of peace the gods allowed!  
Even common things in anguish have grown rare  
As legends of a richer life gone by,  
Like flowers that in their time were no one's care,  
But blooming late are loved and grudged to die.

What mercy is it I should live and move,  
If haunted ever by war's agony?  
Nature is love and will remember love,  
And kindly uses those whom fear set free.  
Let me not even think of you as dead,  
O never dead! you live, your old songs yet  
Pass me each day, your faith still routs my dread,  
Your past and future are my parapet.

You looked before and after! these calm shires,  
The doting sun, the orchards all aflame,  
These joyful flocking swallows round the spires,  
Bonfires and turreted stacks—well may you claim,  
Still seeing these sweet familiar bygones, all!  
Still dwells in you their has-been, their to-be,  
And walking in their light you fear no fall.  
This is your holding: mine, across the sea,

Where much I find to trace old friendship by:  
"Here one bade us farewell," "Here supped we then,"  
"Wit never sweeter fell than that July"—  
Even sometimes comes the praise of better men.  
The land lies like a jewel in the mind,  
And featured sharp shall lie when other fades,  
And through its veins the eternal memories wind  
As that lost column down its colonnades.

## *La Quinque Rue*

O ROAD in dizzy moonlight bleak and blue,  
With forlorn effigies of farms besprawled,  
With trees bitterly bare or snapped in two,  
Why riddle me thus—attracted and appalled?  
For surely now the grounds both left and right  
Are tilled, and scarless houses undismayed  
Glow in the lustrous mercy of sweet night  
And one may hear the flute or fiddle played.  
Why lead me then  
Through the foul-gorged, the cemeterial fen  
To fear's sharp sentries? Why do dreadful rags  
Fur these bulged banks, and feebly move to the wind?  
That battered drum, say why it clacks and brags?  
Another and another! what's behind?  
How is it that these flints flame out fire's tongue,  
Shrivelling my thought? these collapsed skeletons,  
What are they, and these iron hunks among?  
Why clink those spades, why glare these startling suns  
And topple to the wet and crawling grass,  
Where the strange briars in taloned hedges twine?  
What need of that stopped tread, that countersign?  
O road, I know those muttering groups you pass.  
I know your way of turning blood to glass.  
But, I am told, to-night you safely shine  
To trim roofs and cropped fields; the error's mine.

## *“Trench Nomenclature”*

GENIUS named them, as I live! What but genius could compress  
In a title what man's humour said to man's supreme distress?  
*Jacob's Ladder* ran reversed, from earth to a fiery pit extending,  
With not angels but poor Angles, those for the most part  
descending.  
Thence *Brock's Benefit* commanded endless fireworks by two  
nations,

Yet some voices there were raised against the rival coruscations.  
*Picturedome* peeped out upon a dream, not Turner could surpass,  
And presently the picture moved, and greyed with corpses and  
morass.

So down south; and if remembrance travel north, she marvels yet  
At the sharp Shakespearean names, and with sad mirth her eyes  
are wet.

*The Great Wall of China* rose, a four-foot breastwork, fronting  
guns

That, when the word dropp'd, beat at once its silly ounces with  
brute tons;

Odd *Krab Krawl* on paper looks, and odd the foul-breathed alley  
twisted,

As one feared to twist there too, if *Minnie*, forward quean,  
insisted.

Where the Yser at *Dead End* floated on its bloody waters  
Dead and rotten monstrous fish, note (east) *The Pike and Eel*  
headquarters.

Ah, such names and apparitions! name on name! what's in a name?  
From the fabled vase the genie in his shattering horror came.

### *The Ancre at Hamel: Afterwards*

WHERE tongues were loud and hearts were light

I heard the Ancre flow;

Waking oft at the mid of night

I heard the Ancre flow.

I heard it crying, that sad rill,

Below the painful ridge,

By the burnt unraftered mill

· And the relic of a bridge.

And could this sighing water seem

To call me far away,

And its pale word dismiss as dream

The voices of to-day?

The voices in the bright room chilled  
And that mourned on alone;  
The silence of the full moon filled  
With that brook's troubling tone.

The struggling Ancre had no part  
In these new hours of mine,  
And yet its stream ran through my heart;  
I heard it grieve and pine,  
As if its rainy tortured blood  
Had swirled into my own,  
When by its battered bank I stood  
And shared its wounded moan.

### *Recognition*

OLD friend, I know you line by line,  
The touch, the tone, the turn of phrase,  
Old autumn day, beloved and mine,  
Returning after many days;  
The ten years' journey since we bade farewell  
No hinted change or loss in you would ever tell.

Your countenance still ripe and kind  
Gazes upon me, godlike day,  
And finding you again I find  
The tricks of time all thrown away.  
The recollected turns to here and now  
Beneath the equipoising glory of your brow.

Now to your heaven the gossamers gleam,  
Still soaring in their trembling play,  
Their rosy scarves are spied astream;  
Whence borne and blown no one could say—  
All out and dancing in the blue profound,  
The tranquil ultimation of the ages round.

And here's that narrow orchard's grass,  
The last green luck for many a mile;  
The patient lines of mules I pass,  
And then must stand and talk awhile  
With gallant Maycock, spurred and gaitered, glowing  
With this ripe sun, and red as any orchard growing.

This comrade, born to sow and stack,  
—A golden sheaf might seem his brother—  
To-night will ride where the angry track  
Is death and ruin in a smother,  
To-night I too must face the world's mad end—  
But first we'll make this day, this godlike day our friend.

### *The Still Hour*

As in the silent darkening room I lay,  
While winter's early evening, heavy-paced  
As ploughmen from our swarthy soil, groped on  
From the cold mill upon the horizon hill  
And over paddocks to the neighbouring lodges  
And lay as I, tired out with colourless toil,  
Inert, the lubber fiend, whose puffing drowse  
The moon's dawn scarce would fret, through the low cloud,—  
When thus at ebb I lay, my silence flowered  
Gently as later bloom into a warm  
Harmonious chiming; like a listener I  
Was hushed. The spirits of remembrance all  
With one consent made music, a flood, a haze,  
A vista all to one ripe blushing blended.

That summer veil of sweet sound then awhile  
Gave me clear voices, as though from rosy distance  
There had been drifting multitude of song,  
And then the bells each in his round were heard;  
The tower that throned them seen, and even the golden  
Chanticleer that frolicked on its top.

From my broad murmuring ode there came fair forth  
The cries of playing children on one day,  
At one blue dewy hour, by one loved green;  
And then the brook was tumbling lit like gems  
Down its old sluice, and old boy-heroes stood  
To catch its sparkling stonefish—I heard even  
The cry that hailed the chestnut tench's downfall  
In the next swim, that strange historic victim.  
From church and pasture, sweetheart and sworn friend,  
From the hill's hopgrounds to the lowest leas  
In the rook-routed vale, from the blind boy  
Who lived by me to the dwellers in the heath,  
From robins building in the gipsy's kettle  
Thrown in our hedge, to waterfowl above  
The mouldering mill, distinct and happy now  
Ten thousand singings from my childhood rang.

And time seemed stealing forward as they sounded,  
The syllables of first delights passed; years  
That ended childhood with their secret sigh  
Uttered their joys, still longed-for, still enshrined.  
And then what voices? Straight, it seemed, from those,  
While a long age was silent as the grave,  
The utterance passed to that stern course of chances  
That crowded far-off Flanders with ourselves.  
I heard the signallers lead the strong battalion  
With bold songs flying to the breeze like banners,  
The quiet courage once again of Daniells  
By some few words built up a fort around me,  
And while the long guns clattered through the towns  
I, rather, heard the clack of market-women,  
The hostel's gramophone and gay girls fooling,  
And chants in painted churches, and my friend's  
Lively review of Flemish contraries.  
Or, was not this the green Bethune canal  
And these our shouts, our laughs, our awkward plunges,  
While summer's day went cloudless to its close?  
There shone the Ancre, red-leafed woods above it,  
The blue speed of its waters swirled through causeways;



There from his hammock in the apple orchard  
Up sprang old Swain and rallied intruding youngsters.  
The company now fell in, to the very yard,  
And once again marched eager towards the Somme,  
And there, a score of voices leapt again  
After a hare that left her seat in the corn.  
I think I'd know that twinkling field to-day.

So in a swift succession my still hour  
Heard Flanders voices, in the line direct  
From those of childhood; but at last the host  
In such confusion as nigh stopt my breath  
With glory and anguish striving, drew far on  
And all became a drone, that in decline  
From summer's bravery changed to autumn chill,  
And as the music vague and piteous grew,  
I saw the mist die from its pleasant charm,  
Now fierce with early frost its numb shroud lay  
Along sad ridges, and as one aloof  
I saw the praying rockets mile on mile  
Climb all too weak from those entangled there,  
Climb for the help that could not help them there;  
And even these purple vapours died away  
And left the surly evening brown as clay  
Upon those ridges battered into chaos  
Whence one deep moaning, one deep moaning came.

### *The Avenue*

Up the long colonnade I press, and strive  
By love to thank God that I go alive:  
And the night dark as palls of cloud can prove  
Bids me seek beauty, while wetshod I move,  
In the scarce-glimmering boles and flying boughs  
That run up black and naked to Heaven's brows  
And are as still as life could ever be.  
Thus think I trudging on to know each tree,  
This leaning out of line; that with great rings,

Ay, ruffs of gnarled grain, whence the forked top springs;  
That with its crow's nest; one whose boughs stoop down  
Like roots into the sward below; one's crown  
Struck by the lightning, whence it stands alone  
Stark staring mad but dead, its own tombstone.

And still trees, trees; long lies the journey through,  
Till the thought runs like rebel dogs askew,  
And soon one tree is like the rest a tree:  
If stunt or sturdy, all are one to me.  
While men ahead, behind and left and right,  
Tramp over the greasy cobbles through midnight,  
Between great monolith trees, and often throw  
Their strapped packs up to ease them, as they go  
Half in a sleep, brain-cramped, dead though they live;  
And those who speak find but few words to give.

Drenchingly dripped the trees, the blown sleet came,  
These trees were jagged with worse than lightning's flame,  
These fields were gouged with worse than ploughs, a moan  
Worse than the wind's with every wind went on.  
The rattling limbers hurrying past would jar  
The jangled nerves, and candles' chancing gleam  
From sweating cellars looked sweet peace as far  
As any star and wilder than a dream  
To him who soon would be beyond the wire  
Listening his wits to ague in the mire,  
And waiting till the drumfire hours began,  
In the fool's triumph of the soul of man:  
Beneath those lights whose fountain-play would shine  
On quiet hamlets miles behind the line,  
That in our respite we had watched ascend,  
And poise their drooped heads scouring end to end  
The grey front lines; and plucking at death's sleeve  
They showed him in the nick new skulls to cleave,  
Yet never once lit up our destiny,  
But moped and mowed in dizzy secrecy.  
Now on the sky I see the dull lights burn  
Of that small village whither I return.

The trees hide backward in the mists, the men  
Are lying in their thankless graves agen,  
And I a stranger in my home pass by  
To seek and serve the beauty that must die.

### *Behind the Line*

TREASURE not so the forlorn days  
When dun clouds flooded the naked plains  
    With foul remorseless rains;  
    Tread not those memory ways  
Where by the dripping alien farms,  
Starved orchards with their shrivelled arms,  
The bitter mouldering wind would whine  
At the brisk mules clattering towards the Line.

Remember not with so sharp skill  
Each chasm in the clouds that strange with fire  
    Lit pyramid-fosse and spire  
    Miles on miles from our hill;  
In the magic glass, aye, then their lure  
Like heaven's houses gleaming pure  
Might soothe the long-imprisoned sight  
And put the double storm to flight.

Enact not you so like a wheel  
The round of evenings in sandbagged rooms  
    Where candles flicked the glooms;  
    The jests old time could steal  
From ugly destiny, on whose brink  
The poor fools grappled fear with drink,  
And snubbed the hungry raving guns  
With endless tunes on gramophones.

About you spreads the world anew,  
The old fields all for your sense rejoice,  
    Music has found her ancient voice,  
    From the hills there's heaven on earth to view;

And kindly Mirth will raise his glass  
With you to bid dull Care go pass—  
And still you wander muttering on  
Over the shades of shadows gone.

### *Their Very Memory*

Hear, O hear,  
They were as the welling waters,  
Sound, swift, clear,  
They were all the running waters'  
Music down the greenest valley.

Might words tell  
What an echo sung within me?  
What proud bell  
Clangs a note of what within me  
Pealed to be with those enlisted?

When they smiled,  
Earth's inferno changed and melted  
Greenwood mild;  
Every village where they halted  
Shone with them through square and alley.

Now my mind  
Faint and few records their showings,  
Brave, strong, kind—  
I'd unlock you all their doings  
But the keys are lost and twisted.

This still grows,  
Through my land or dull or dazzling  
Their spring flows;  
But to think of them's a fountain,  
Tears of joy and music's rally.

## *A.G.A.V.*

REST you well among your race, you who cannot be dead;  
Sleep lives in that country place, sleep now, pillow your head;  
Time has been you could not sleep, would not if you could,  
But the relief stands in the keep where you so nobly stood.

Ardour, valour, the ceaseless plan all agreed to be yours,  
Wit with these familiar ran, when you went to the wars;  
If one cause I have for pride, it is to have been your friend,  
To have lain in shell-holes by your side, with you to have seen  
    impend

The meteors of the hour of fire, to have talked where speech was  
    love,  
Where through fanged woods and maw-gray mire the rain and  
    murder drove;  
There unchanged and on your mark you laughed at some quaint  
    clue,  
And now, though time grows dull and dark, I hear, I bless you  
    anew.

Sleep—bless you, that would not please you, gallantest dear.  
Should I find you beneath yew trees? better to look for you here.  
With those others whom well we knew, who went so early away,  
Will you not rather gladden my view? on a dead, deathless day

Riding into the ancient town, smiling scarcely aware,  
Along the dale, over the down, into the drowsy square,  
There to tarry in careless ways, in church, or shop, or inn,  
Leisuring after fiery days; calm-shining, more than kin;

Though dim the guns of chaos roared upon the eastern gate,  
Though every hour the clock-hand scored brought closer a  
    desperate date—  
Well shone you then, and I would will you freedom eternal there,  
Vast tumult past, and the proud sense still of vast to-morrows to  
    dare.

## *Another Journey from Bethune to Cuinchy*

I SEE you walking  
To a pale petalled sky,  
And the green silent water  
Is resting there by;  
It seems like bold madness  
But that "you" is I.

I long to interpret  
That voice of a bell  
So silver and simple,  
Like a wood-dove-egg shell,  
On the bank where you are walking—  
It was I heard it well.

At the lock the sky bubbles  
Are dancing and dying,  
Some the smallest of pearls,  
Some moons, and all flying,  
Returning, and melting—  
You watched them, half-crying.

This is Marie-Louise,  
You need not have told me—  
I remember her eyes  
And the Cognac she sold me—  
It is you that are sipping it;  
Even so she cajoled me.

Her roof and her windows  
Were nothing too sound,  
And here and there holes  
Some forty feet round  
(Antiquer than Homer)  
Encipher the ground.

Do you jib at my tenses?  
Who's who? you or I?  
Do you own Bethune  
And that grave eastward sky?  
Bethune is miles off now,  
'Ware wire and don't die.

The telegraph posts  
Have revolted at last,  
And old Perpendicular  
Leans to the blast,  
The rigging hangs ragging  
From each plunging mast.

What else would you fancy,  
For here it is war?  
My thanks, young upstart,  
I've been here before—  
I know this Division,  
And hate this damned Corps.

"Kingsclere" hath its flowers,  
And piano to boot;  
The coolest of cellars,  
—Your finest salute!  
You fraudulent wretch—  
You appalling recruit!

O haste, for the darnel  
Hangs over the trench,  
As yellow as the powder  
Which kills with a stench!  
Shall you go or I go?  
O I'll go—don't mench!

But both of us slither  
Between the mossed banks,  
And through thirsty chalk

Where the red-hatted cranks  
Have fixed a portcullis  
With notice-board—thanks!

A mad world, my masters!  
Whose masters? my lad,  
If you are not I,  
It is I who am mad;  
Let's report to the company,  
*Your* mess, egad.

Well, now sir (though lime juice  
Is nothing to aid),  
This young fellow met me,  
And kindly essayed  
To guide me—but now it seems  
I am betrayed.

He says he is I,  
And that I am not he;  
But the same omened sky  
Led us both, we agree,—  
If we cannot commingle,  
Pray take him and me.

For where the numb listener  
Lies in the dagged weed,  
I'll see your word law,  
And this youth has agreed  
To let me use *his* name—  
Take the will for the deed.

And what if the whistle  
Of the far-away train  
Come moan-like through mist  
Over Coldstream Lane,  
Come mocking old love  
Into waking again?



And the thinkings of life,  
Whether those of thy blood,  
Or the manifold soul  
Of field and of flood—  
What if they come to you  
Bombed in the mud?

Well, now as afore  
I should wince so, no doubt,  
And still to my star  
I should cling, all about,  
And muddy one midnight  
We all will march out.

—Sir, this man may talk,  
But he surely omits  
That a crump any moment  
May blow us to bits;  
On this rock his identity-  
Argument splits.

I see him walking  
In a golden-green ground,  
Where pinafores abound,  
And skylarks abound,  
But that's his own business.  
My time for trench round.

### *On Reading that the Rebuilding of Ypres Approached Completion*

I HEAR you now, I hear you, shy perpetual companion,  
Whose deep whispers  
Never wholly failed upon my twilight; but for months now  
Too dimly quivered  
About the crowded corridors of purpose and the clamouring  
Swarmed ingresses where like squinting cobblers and half-tailors  
On a weary ship that moors in dock, with grimy hatches,  
Cross-purpose jangles.

Those the master, with a sudden fountain anger, towering  
By his mood a Cyclops,  
Back has driven, back, and snivelling, cackling, down the ladder.  
I, so springing,  
Have lashed the buzzing bullies out, and in the freed air pause  
now,  
Hearing you, whose face is ever one and ever million,  
This dear dead one's, this dear living one's, no man's and all men's,  
True map of Flanders.

Wordless language! well to me this moment making music,  
Utmost union.  
So, so, so we meet again; here we know our co-existence,  
And your voice is  
My self-utterance, while the region thus is hush and lonely,  
Not a charlatan thought there left to gnaw my heart is skulking,  
Nor one sunbeam sets the tingling atoms dancing by me  
Like doubt's mad apings.

But my danger lies even here, even now worn weak and nerveless  
I go drooping,  
Heavy-headed, and would sleep thus lulled with your love's  
fulness.  
Sharply awake me  
With fierce words, cold as the fangs of bayonets in the frozen saps,  
Simple as the fact that you must kill, or go for rations,  
As clear as morning blue, as red and grotesque as the open mouths  
Of winter corpses.

I hear you now: the voice, the voice of marching bowed battalions,  
Of one strong soldier,  
Now black-haired Daniells, now more saxon Clifford, now hale  
Worley—  
O, speak. Our old tongue.  
'T was Thy neighbour once, thou rugged Pile, thou whiteness,  
Ypres,

How mighty in thy misery, how royal in thy ravishing,  
With fingers brittle as ice, I champed and clattered by the convent  
And shouted orders;

Which echoes scrambling on the snowy walls and eyeless bulwarks  
Made haste to carry,  
But they could not, for the curious air was overburdened  
With ancient echoes.

Vaults below the convent, when they pitied and would shelter,  
Scarce could lure me, counter-lured though eyelids pressed like  
roof-leads;

Nor such sights as the circling pigeons of poor St. Martin held me  
From my huge labours.

Blood-like swam the moon, the city's sable wounds lurked,  
Still she cried out,  
*Be most constant!* Thence with clumsy zeal and sacred cursing  
Through the shrill grass,  
Through the trapping thicket-thorns of death, that sudden planter,  
While in the light of the moon and snow his blueness masked all  
faces,

Stern I went, the weaker kind most mercilessly heartening  
To the shambles

All for her, that gap-toothed witch, that beauty at the butcher's,  
To me intrusted;  
Nor did I desert her, though without so much as a second's  
warning,  
Some harsh slash-hook  
Slit my skull and poured out all the fountains of my senses;  
Burst the bloodgates; still I came, and went and came to man her,  
Left Posthoornstraat and Goldfish Château, joined with waxen  
hands the cleft trench,  
Hating and loving.

She, with that, was sometime mild and from the spectre ruin  
Herself seemed lifting;  
Walking in some silent moments, to the glimmer of candles,  
I smiled and marvelled

How the dusky houses in the rainy gloom with feigned renaissance  
Stood for life, and surely from the opened doors would be duly coming  
Women and lightfoot children, lover there in the lamplight grow to lover—  
Death, stop that laughing!

Nor has ever been the man, not Milton with his angels,  
Who found such chorus,  
Such diapason and amazement in strange old oriental  
Fantasy-places,  
As I in gross and clod-like names of hamlets by the city;  
The fame of Kemmel clanged, and Athens dulled: I listened  
If one spoke of Zonnebeke with thronged imagination,  
A dazing distance.

For words spoke at the *Mermaid*, I would not give the meanest  
That I heard echoing  
In some green-shuttered *Nachtegal* or *Kasteel*, a brief evening,  
While the panes were jumping;  
Far less one of the sweet astounding jests and sallies  
That dared contest with smoking salvoes the forlorn hope's  
attention,  
That wreathed the burning steel that slew with man's eternal  
laurel  
In that one city.

For her was much accomplished, and she will not forget me,  
Whose name is Legion;  
She will know who knew her best, and with his rough warm  
garment  
Would have wrapt her;  
Her midnight tears will ever well as grayly she remembers  
The hillock's signifying tree, that choked and gouged and miry  
Was like a cross, but such a cross that there no bleeding Figure  
Might hang without tautology.

And mine she is; they now may build, sign and assign there,  
Above bright doorways  
Paint in gold their titles; shrine among their tufted gardens,  
As did their elders,  
The statues of their mild desire Arcadian: but I  
Am in the soil and sap, and in the becks and conduits  
My blood is flowing, and my sigh of consummation  
Is the wind in the rampart trees.<sup>37</sup>

## *Flanders Now*

THERE, where before no master action struck  
The grim Fate in the face, and cried "What now?",  
Where gain and commonplace lay in their ruck,  
And pulled the beetroots, milked the muddy cow,  
Heard the world's rumours, wished themselves good luck,  
And slept, and rose, and lived and died somehow,—

A light is striking keen as angels' spears,  
Brightness outwelling, cool as roses, there;  
From every crossroad majesty appears,  
Each cottage gleams like Athens on the air;  
Ghosts by broad daylight, answered not by fears  
But bliss unwordable, are walking there.

Who thirsts, or aches, or gropes as going blind?  
Friend, drink with me at these fair-foliaged wells,  
Or on the bruised life lay this unction kind,  
Or mark this light that lives in lily-bells,  
There rests and always shall the wandering mind,  
Those clumsy farms to-day grow miracles:

Since past each wall and every common mark,  
Field path and wooden bridge, there once went by  
The flower of manhood, daring the huge dark,  
The famished cold, the roaring in the sky;  
They died in splendour, these who claimed no spark  
Of glory save the light in a friend's eye.

## *Inaccessibility in the Battlefield*

FORGOTTEN streams, yet wishful to be known,  
    With humble moan  
In rushy channels working, called us on;  
    These might have with as good result  
    Remained occult  
    And gray and dumb;  
For where they curled and called we could not come.

Some tottering hut they called the Moated Grange  
    Bade our steps range  
And cramped routine for rural loves exchange;  
    That thatched spectre might as well  
    With some fierce shell  
    Have sunk to earth;  
A jealous god declined our going forth.

And that delightful maybush, that above  
    The dead mill-drove  
With rose-lipped courtesy and whispering love  
    Enchanted, was not ours to touch.  
    Between, this grutch,  
    This staring curse  
Made a blind wall, and kept our lips averse.

The simple road proposed most kind desires  
    For further spires,  
Hearths, garden-grots, dove-cots; but fang-fixed wires  
    And ambushed airy murder lay  
    All day, that way;  
    A simple road,—  
The rampart where the sleepless phantom strode.

## *War's People*

THROUGH the tender amaranthine domes  
Of angel-evenings echoing summer song,  
Through the black rock-tombs  
Of winter, and where autumn floods prolong  
The midnight roar and tumbling thunder,  
Through spring's daisy-peeping wonder,  
Round and beyond and over and under,  
I see our homes.

Bloom, healing rosiness and wild-wine flowers,  
Or lift a vain wing in the mire, dropt leaf;  
Storm-spirit, coil your lightnings round mad towers;  
Go forth, you marching Seasons, horsemen Hours;  
Blow silver triumphs, Joy, and knell, grey Grief.

These after-pieces will not now dispel  
The scene and action that was learned in hell.  
These charming veils a thought has strength to waft  
With one quick thrill aloft; and then we view  
Seasons and hours we better knew,  
Desperate budding of untimely green,  
Skies and soft cloud-land savagely serene,  
Steel or mere sleet that beat past-caring bones,  
Night-tempest not so loud as those long moans  
From low-gorged lairs, which outshine Zion's towers,  
Weak rags of walls, the forts of godlike powers.  
We went, returned,  
But came with that far country learned;  
Strange stars, and dream-like sounds, changed speech and  
law are ours.

## *The Watchers*

I HEARD the challenge "Who goes there?"  
Close-kept but mine through midnight air;  
I answered and was recognised  
And passed, and kindly thus advised:  
"There's someone crawlin' through the grass  
By the red ruin, or there was,  
And them machine guns been a firin'  
All the time the chaps was wirin',  
So sir if you're goin' out  
You'll keep your 'ead well down no doubt."

When will the stern fine "Who goes there?"  
Meet me again in midnight air?  
And the gruff sentry's kindness, when  
Will kindness have such power again?  
It seems, as now I wake and brood,  
And know my hour's decrepitude,  
That on some dewy parapet  
The sentry's spirit gazes yet,  
Who will not speak with altered tone  
When I at last am seen and known.

## *Return of the Native*

ABOUT the Ramparts, quiet as a mother  
Kissing a child in dreams, the summer night  
Cast a soft veil; the power beyond the stars  
Was now intent upon the consonance  
Of boughs and airs and earthy purities.

We stood, hard-watching in the eastward dark  
A glowing pyre and vapour by Hill Sixty,  
And wondered who was mocking, Peace or War?  
The last train answered with far-dying echoes,



And passed along the cutting; now the plain  
Lay in its first sleep, all its dwellings slept  
And called the night their own. The old law here  
Had come again with peasant tread to claim  
So full and unabated property  
That not one mark of a mad occupation  
Might be conceived.

We only, watching, seemed  
The battlefield, if we were not deluded  
By dreaming ecstasies; could we have seen  
The ordinance of eternity reversed,  
And night disdained and dazzled into day,  
And day shot into gulfs of glaring gloom?  
Man in our time, and with our help, grew here  
A pale Familiar; here he struck the Sun,  
And for a season turned the Sun to blood;  
Many such nights as this his Witch and he  
Unmasked their metal, and with poisonous work  
Broke the fair sanctuary of this world's rest  
And circumvented God. But now misrule  
With all its burning rout had gone on the wind,  
Leaving us with the south-west breeze to whisper  
In bushes younger than the brows it cooled,  
Foreheads entrenched with all the argument  
Of what was once Time's vast compulsion, now  
Incapable to stir a weed or moth.

*Ypres, 1929*

*EXPERIENCE AND SOLILOQUY*



## *The Estrangement*

DIM through cloud vails the moonlight trembles down  
A cold grey vapour on the huddling town;  
And far from cut-throat's corner the eye sees  
Unsilvered hogs'-backs, pallid stubble-leas;  
Barn-ridges gaunt and gleamless: blue like ghosts  
The knoll mill and the odd cowls of the oasts,  
And lonely homes pondering with joys and fears  
The dusty travail of three hundred years.

In the ashen twilight momentarily afield,  
Like thistle-wool wafting across the weald,  
Flickers a sighing spirit; as he passes,  
The lisping aspens and the scarfed brook grasses  
With wakened melancholy writhe the air.

In the false moonlight wails my old despair,  
And I am but a pipe for its wild moan;  
Crying through the misty bypaths; slumber-banned;  
Impelled and voiced, to piercing coronach blown:

A hounded kern in this grim No Man's Land,  
I am spurned between the secret countersigns  
Of every little grain of rustling sand  
In these parched lanes where the grey wind maligns;  
Oaks, once my friends, with ugly murmurings  
Madden me, and ivy whirs like condor wings:  
The very bat that stoops and whips askance  
Shrills malice at the soul grown strange in France.

1919

## *Sick Bed*

HALF dead with fever here in bed I sprawl,  
In candlelight watching the odd flies crawl  
Across the ceiling's bleak white desolation;—

Can they not yet have heard of gravitation?—  
Hung upside down above the precipice  
To doze the night out; ignorance is bliss!  
Your blood be on your heads, ridiculous flies.

Dizzying with these, I glare and tantalize  
At the motley hides of books which moulder here,  
"On Choosing A Career," "Ten Thousand a Year";  
"Ellis on Sheep," "Lamb's Tales," a doleful Gay,  
A has-been-Young, dead "Lives," vermilion Gray,  
And a whole corps of 1790 twelves.  
My eye goes blurred along these gruesome shelves,  
My brain whirs Poems of . . . Poems of . . . like a clock;  
And I stare for my life at the square black ebony block  
Of darkness in the open window-frame.  
Then my thoughts flash in one white searching flame  
On my little lost daughter; I gasp and grasp to see  
Her shy smile pondering out who I might be,  
Her rathe-ripe rounded cheeks, near-violet eyes.  
Long may I stare; her stony Fate denies  
The vision of her, though tired Fancy's sight  
Scrawl with pale curves the dead and scornful night.

All the night's full of questing flights and calls  
Of owls and bats, white owls from time-struck walls,  
Bats with their shrivelled speech and dragonish wings.  
Beneath, a strange step crunches the ash path where  
None goes so late, I know: the mute vast air  
Wakes to a great sigh.

Now the murmurings,  
Cricks, rustlings, knocks, all forms of tiny sound  
That have long been happening in my room half-heard,  
Grow fast and fierce, each one a ghostly word.  
I feel the grutching pixies hedge me round;  
"Folly" sneers courage (and flies). Stealthily creaks  
The threshold, fingers fumble, terror speaks,  
And bursting into sweats I muffle deep  
My face in pillows, praying for merciful sleep.

## *The South-West Wind*

WE stood by the idle weir,  
Like bells the waters played,  
In moonlight sleeping through the shire,  
As it would never fade:  
So slept our shining peace of mind  
Till rose a south-west wind.

How sorrow comes who knows?  
And here joy surely had been:  
But joy like any wild wind blows  
From mountains none has seen,  
And still its cloudy veilings throws  
On the bright road it goes.

The black-plumed poplars swung  
Softly across the sky;  
The ivy sighed, the river sung,  
Woolpacks were wafting high.  
The moon her golden tinges flung  
On these she straight was lost among.

O south-west wind of the soul,  
That brought such new delight,  
And passing by in music stole  
Love's rich and trusting light,  
Would that we thrilled to thy least breath,  
Now all is still as death.

## *The Watermill*

I'LL rise at midnight and I'll rove  
Up the hill and down the drove  
That leads to the old unnoticed mill,  
And think of one I used to love:

There stooping to the hunching wall  
I'll stare into the rush of stars  
Or bubbles that the waterfall  
Brings forth and breaks in ceaseless wars.

The shelving hills have made a fourm  
Where the mill holdings, shelter warm,  
And here I came with one I loved  
To watch the seething millions swarm.  
But long ago she grew a ghost  
Though walking with me every day;  
Even when her beauty burned me most  
She to a spectre dimmed away—

Until though cheeks all morning-bright  
And black eyes gleaming life's delight  
And singing voice dwelt in my sense,  
Herself paled on my inward sight.  
She grew one whom deep waters glassed.  
Then in dismay I hid from her,  
And lone by talking brooks at last  
I found a Love still lovelier.

O lost in tortured days of France!  
Yet still the moment comes like chance  
Born in the stirring midnight's sigh  
Or in the wild wet sunset's glance:  
And how I know not, but the stream  
Still sounds like vision's voice, and still  
I watch with Love the bubbles gleam,  
I walk with Love beside the mill.

The heavens are thrall'd with cloud, yet grey,  
Half-moonlight swims the field till day,  
The stubbled fields, the bleaching woods;  
Even this bleak hour was stolen away  
By this shy water falling low  
And calling low the whole night through

And calling back the long ago  
And richest world I ever knew.

The hop-kiln fingers cobweb-white  
With discord dim turned left and right,  
And when the wind was south and small  
The sea's far whisper drowns the night,  
Scarce more than mantling ivy's voice  
That in the tumbling water trailed.  
Love's spirit called me to rejoice  
When she to nothingness had paled:

For Love the daffodils shone here  
In grass the greenest of the year,  
Daffodils seemed the sunset lights  
And silver birches budded clear:  
And all from east to west there strode  
Great shafted clouds in argent air,  
The shining chariot-wheels of God,  
And still Love's moment sees them there.

## *The Forest*

AMONG the golden groves when June walketh there  
I go to find old loves in the haunted air,  
And with the humble bee down the ancient rides  
I pause whene'er I see where my honey hides.

But scarcely now I heed the small welcome moss  
Or time's secrets read or pore on pit and fosse,  
Or kindle at blooms I knew not before,  
Though twayblade haunt the glooms and strange hellebore.

The pheasant crows anear, I lift not my head;  
Wildcats race in fear—as well flee the dead!  
Oaks breathe and pines sigh, and all for praise,  
And yet my soul divines little that each says:



But the whole wood moves again and again  
Memory of old loves, perfect joy of pain;  
Without words I've found the hid world at last  
In the woods deep drowned, after so long past:

Not my first delight, the sweet Kentish girl,  
Once ever in my sight, but gone, gone in the whirl  
Of time's broken stream, till I cannot guess  
Her smile or primrose gleam of new loveliness:

Not my childhood's bliss, in greenwoods to go  
Where great snakes might hiss, so high reeds did grow,  
And from early day till eve trembling crept,  
Pioneers to stray where the black ponds slept:

But the rich hours chance gave, where dry-lipped with war  
I left him to rave on his ridges not far,  
And lay in a green shade of Aveluy Wood  
And with those hours allayed the fever in the blood;

Not a leaf regarding, but one with the wood's soul,  
All my thoughts discarding—refreshed thence and whole  
I went to live or die, and five years are flown,  
But not till now was I with the woods again alone.

### *“The Earth hath Bubbles”*

COME they no more, those ecstasies of earth,  
To make men tales for winter's hearth?  
Has the stern spirit wearied of his dreams,  
Sleeps he too deep for passion's gleams?  
Yet still the moon can move unfathomed tears,  
Even in the noonday field walk lonely fears.

The owl, the fox cry chilling in the night,  
A thousand voices turn cheeks white,

Long sighings mourn abroad when winds all sleep,  
Bodies through bursting hedges leap:  
And if we chance awhile to lose our hold  
On certainty, the morning finds us bold.

Who saw the sphinx? 'twas you! along the street  
You heard the beat of padded feet,  
You ran with curded blood, but past it sped,  
Leapt the high wall, showed its man's head!  
Four-footed, lowering at the moon in wane—  
That now you call a sickness of your brain?

We've lain abed and felt the whole house quake  
To a blow, dogs barked not: who should break  
The gotch on its nail, the vase on the sill? or why  
Should all tradition seem a lie?  
Or by what frenzy of their fiend prince were  
The earth's hobgoblins banished their old sphere?

## *Death of Childhood Beliefs*

THERE the puddled lonely lane,  
Lost among the red swamp shallows,  
Gleams through drifts of summer rain  
Down to ford the sandy shallows,  
Where the dewberry brambles crane.

And the stream in cloven clay  
Round the bridging sheep-gate stutters,  
Wind-spun leaves burn silver-grey,  
Far and wide the blue moth flutters  
Over swathes of warm new hay.

Scrambling boys with mad to-do  
Paddle in the sedges' hem,  
Ever finding joy anew;  
Clocks toll time out—not for them,  
With what years to frolic through!

How shall I return and how  
Look once more on those old places!  
For Time's cloud is on me now  
That each day, each hour effaces  
Visions once on every bough.

Stones could talk together then,  
Jewels lay for hoes to find,  
Each oak hid King Charles agen,  
Ay, nations in his powdered rind;  
Sorcery lived with homeless men.

Spider Dick, with cat's green eyes  
That could pierce stone walls, has flitted—  
By some hedge he shakes and cries,  
A lost man, half-starved, half-witted,  
Whom the very stoats despise.

Trees on hill-tops then were Palms,  
Closing pilgrims' arbours in;  
David walked there singing Psalms;  
Out of the clouds white seraphin  
Leaned to watch us fill our bin.

Where's the woodman now to tell  
Will o' the Wisp's odd fiery anger?  
Where's the ghost to toll the bell  
Startling midnight with its clangour  
Till the wind seemed but a knell?

Drummers jumping from the tombs  
Banged and thumped all through the town,  
Past shut shops and silent rooms  
While the flaming spires fell down;—  
Now but dreary thunder booms.

Smuggler trapped in headlong spate,  
Smuggler's mare with choking whinney,

Well I knew your fame, your fate;  
By the ford and shaking spinney  
Where you perished I would wait,

Half in glory, half in fear,  
While the fierce flood, trough and crest,  
Whirled away the shepherd's gear,  
And sunset wildfire coursed the west,  
Crying Armageddon near.

### *The Canal*

WHERE so dark and still  
Slept the water, never changing,  
From the glad sport in the meadows  
Oft I turned me.

Fear would strike me chill  
On the clearest day in summer,  
Yet I loved to stand and ponder  
Hours together

By the tarred bridge rail—  
There the lockman's vine-clad window,  
Mirrored in the tomb-like water,  
Stared in silence

Till, deformed and pale  
In the sunken cavern shadows,  
One by one imagined demons  
Scowled upon me.

Barges passed me by,  
With their unknown surly masters  
And small cabins, whereon some rude  
Hand had painted

Trees and castles high.  
Cheerly stepped the towing horses,  
And the women sung their children  
Into slumber.

Barges, too, I saw  
Drowned in mud, drowned, drowned long ages,  
Their grey ribs but seen in summer,  
Their names never:

In whose silted maw  
Swarmed great eels, the priests of darkness,  
Old as they, who came at midnight  
To destroy me.

Like one blind and lame  
Who by some new sense has vision  
And strikes deadlier than the strongest  
Went this water.

Many an angler came,  
Went his ways; and I would know them,  
Some would smile and give me greeting,  
Some kept silence—

Most, one old dragoon  
Who had never a morning hallo,  
But with stony eye strode onward  
Till the water,

On a silent noon,  
That had watched him long, commanded:  
Whom he answered, leaping headlong  
To self-murder.

“Fear and fly the spell,”  
Thus my spirit sang beside me;  
Then once more I ranged the meadows,  
Yet still brooded,

When the threefold knell  
Sounded through the haze of harvest—  
Who had found the lame blind water  
Swift and seeing?

## *The Time is Gone*

THE time is gone when we could throw  
Our angle in the sleepy stream,  
And nothing more desired to know  
Than was it roach or was it bream?  
Sitting there in such a mute delight,  
The kingfisher would come and on the rods alight.

Or, hurrying through the dewy hay  
Without a thought but to make haste,  
We came to where the old ring lay  
And bats and balls seemed heaven at least.  
With our laughing and our giant strokes  
The echoes clacked among the chestnuts and the oaks.

When the spring came up we got  
And out among old Ammet Hills  
Blossoms, aye and pleasures sought  
And found! bloom withers, pleasure chills;  
Then geographers along wild brooks  
We named the tumbling-bays and creeks and horse-shoe crooks.

But one day I found a man  
Leaning on the bridge's rail;  
Dared his downward face to scan,  
And awestruck wondered what could ail  
An elder, blest with all the gifts of years,  
In such a happy place to shed such bitter tears.

## *April Byeway*

FRIEND whom I never saw, yet dearest friend,  
Be with me travelling on the byeway now  
In April's month and mood: our steps shall bend  
By the shut smithy with its penthouse brow  
Armed round with many a felly and crackt plough:  
And we will mark in his white smock the mill  
Standing aloof, long numbed to any wind,  
That in his crannies mourns, and craves him still;  
But now no fortune sends him grain to grind,  
And even the master lies too deep for winds to find.

Grieve not at these: for there are mills amain  
With lusty sails that leap and drop away  
On further knolls, strong backs to fetch the grain.  
The schoolboys' wickets on the green betray  
New games begun and old ones put away.  
Let us fare on, dead friend, O deathless friend,  
Where under his old hat as green as moss  
The hedger chops and finds new gaps to mend,  
And on his bonfires burns the thorns and dross,  
And hums a hymn, the best, thinks he, that ever was.

There the grey guinea-fowl stands in the way,  
The young black heifer and the raw-ribbed mare,  
Scorning to move for tumbrel or for dray—  
They feel themselves as good as farmers there.  
From the young corn the prick-eared leverets stare  
At strangers come to spy the land—small sirs,  
We bring less danger than the very breeze  
Who in great zig-zag blows the bee, and whirs  
In bluebell shadow down the bright green leas;  
From whom in frolic fit the chopt straw darts and flees.

The cherry steeping up in white shall know  
The two friends passing by, and poplar smile  
All gold within; the church-top fowl shall glow

To lure us on, and we shall rest awhile  
Where the wild apple blooms above the stile;  
The yellow frog beneath blinks up half bold,  
Then scares himself into the deeper green.  
And thus spring was for you in days of old,  
And thus will be should I too walk unseen  
By one that thinks me friend, the best that there has been.

All our lone journey laughs for joy, the hours  
Like honey-bees go home in new-found light  
Past the cow-pond amazed with twinkling flowers  
And antique chalk-pit newly dived to white,  
Or idle snow-plough nearly hid from sight.  
The blackbird sings us home, on a sudden peers  
The round tower hung with ivy's blackened chains,  
Then past the little green the byeway veers,  
The mill-sweeps torn, the forge with cobwebbed panes  
That have so many years looked out across the plains.

But the old forge and mill are shut and done,  
The tower is crumbling down, stone by stone falls;  
An age doubt comes creeping in the sun,  
The sun becomes a ghost, the day appals,  
The concourse of a thousand tempests sprawls  
Over the blue-lipped lakes and maddening groves,  
Like agonies of gods the clouds are whirled,  
The stormwind like the demon huntsman roves—  
Still stands my friend, though all's to chaos hurled,  
The unseen friend, the one last friend in all the world.

### *The Child's Grave*

I CAME to the churchyard where pretty Joy lies  
On a morning in April, a rare sunny day;  
Such bloom rose around, and so many birds' cries,  
That I sang for delight as I followed the way.



## *Dead Letters*

(T.L.H.)

THERE lay the letters of a hundred friends  
Of one whose name and years—what else?—we knew;  
    Unordered, faded, past and gone,  
    Mere script that chance had let live on.

Now through this chaos of sad nothing-worth,  
Of unknown moods and matters dead so long,  
    We'll look, we said, for any trace  
    Of those his friends whom years but grace.

And hurrying over pages thick as leaves  
In Vallombrosa, now with surprised hush  
    We met with Mary Shelley's name,  
    Tumultuous for her dead Love's fame.

Nor without trembling could we lay our hand  
To that remorseless parchment which recalled  
    Poor Harriet staring on the cold  
    Oblivious water, deathly bold.

How often, fine as this his silvered hair,  
Appeared the charactery of Shelley's friend,  
    That friend for whom the Ariel gay  
    Went fleeting on a fatal day!

The face of Keats glowed out awhile, and Lamb  
Seemed never far, the darling of our race;  
    And here the tired heroic soul  
    Of Landor lit a homely scroll;

And later names which England's genius bore,  
Writ by the men, flashed out on our survey;  
    And Muse and State we chose in pride  
    From the great throng we cast aside.

*We cast aside!* poor relics, chill and dumb,  
That told us nothing, seemed the chaff that time  
    With his great tempest might have hurled,  
    And no grain lost, from this wide world.

But scanning here more closely, at the last  
We found our thoughts in these unknowns drawn down  
    To comprehend the hopes and fears,  
    The wrongs and harms that loosed these tears;

The half-starved fingers at their drudgeries,  
The brain in fever and endeavouring still,  
    The unechoed songs in beauty's praise,  
    The affection urged in darkest days;

And more and more these nameless annals clutched  
The hasty hand, the heart, till a hundred ghosts  
    Of men unlauded, past and gone,  
    Seemed friends that we had always known.

## *The Eclogue*

So talk ran on, and turning like a lane  
Discovered meetings loved and left behind,  
And pleasure common once came peeping plain,  
A sunshine through the late mists of the mind;  
Leading these two to warm nigh into song  
Upon the river where they dwelt so long;

The ancient river flowing on among  
Sweet hopgrounds and their aisles of tasselled bines,  
Old crooked orchards, fruit-plats straight and young—  
How gently to his sea his wave declines!  
Vexed into whirlpools where the sluices roar,  
But in a field's length easy as before.

The son, drownsed in imagination stern,  
Shaped his remembrance dark and breathless; cries  
A sullen god beside a mumbling urn,  
A hungry blackness full of evil eyes;  
Sees the wind warp, the eddy twirl askance,  
As marks of water-witches on their dance.

The very eels seen through his eyes become  
Sorcerers, oafish bream grow more than wise,  
A babel of tongues shrieks from the salloos dumb,  
Weeds coil a web of death for human flies:  
Terror would bear him on swift wings away,  
But dizzy wonder still would have him stay.

But when the father spoke, the stream was flowing  
Innocent on as pasturing flocks beside,  
A gentle giant moping not nor mowing,  
Heaven's looking-glass with heaven's white pageant pied;  
Sweeter companionship he never knew  
In morning's sun or evening's rosy dew.

There the vole sunned him by the pollard's heel,  
The pollard scored with tow-rope's telling groove;  
Far down the flood the singing bells would peal,  
The bells would peal, the silver swans would move,  
Between the water-mosses' warm green beds,  
Where harmless fish could hide their simple heads.

The youth that saw these things and would not see  
Peopled the waterholes with passion's dream,  
And brought the deathbell moaning over the lea  
To cry his "Drowned, drowned, drowned!" against the stream,  
And gazed the daemon in his watery meuse,  
The swoln ghosts ever starting from the ooze.

But ever in the pauses of his son  
The old man set his bright against the dark,  
Numbering his curious beauties one by one—

Straight as a ploughman driving on his mark,  
Through storms, through stubs, through stones his furrow  
guiding—  
Seeing below calm trees calm waters gliding.

### *The Shadow*

HERE'S a dell that's sunny enough for laughing joy;  
Robins whistling clear enough  
From mossy woodpiles near enough, but where's my joy?

Blithe in truth looks frost's blue eye  
And lovely blue the brook flits by,  
Red-faced sun and jewelled sloe  
And jest of old crow answering crow would all wake joy;

But old time slyly all the while  
Checks the song and dims the smile,  
And sense so eager turns to shade,  
In silence stumbling through the glade.

### *A Fading Phantom*

THE bold sun like a merry lord  
Looked in the barn and laughed there  
To see such roast beef on the board,  
Such ale and jest on draught there;  
The toasts were drunk, and still awhile  
The roof with uproar rung,  
But lured aside I crossed the stile  
And tyrannous tears upsprung.

Far-slanting from the hilly baulk  
The acres drew my gaze  
Into the fields I used to walk  
And into other days:

Hark to that voice—but what was said?  
My brain strove as it thinned.  
I half deciphered from the dead  
What passed me like the wind.

O voice of thousand throats and notes,  
How in this sudden swoon  
Shall mind distil the mist that floats  
So ghostly through the noon?  
I stared upon the far-off wood,  
The weir's eye flashed on mine,  
And chilly ran my summer blood  
To know Time's fluttering sign.

There, Heaven, and there, sweet Heaven, you shone;  
I still surveyed the ground,  
I, like a spy; the grace was gone  
And nothing to be found.  
With memory laboured still my mind  
Fain to unravel life;  
As if, poor fool, so clumsy-kind!  
It knew joy's hieroglyph.

"In luck and love together!" it cried;  
"The hay made incense, gold  
Swept Danae's lap in June's high tide  
As the shower in sunshine rolled;  
Through golden air the river took  
His rich ancestral ease,  
And poppies danced their flames and shook  
Their dark lives to the breeze.

To his vast arms the shepherd oak  
Called Ariel's wingèd rout,  
Cool in crook'd lanes to plodding folk  
The cottages peeped out.  
With plunging elves the wells were wild,  
The brooks with naiads dinned,

The vaporous willows sighed and smiled  
As passed the dallying wind."

No more, my dull interpreter!  
When once the soul is flown  
The tenement's as void of her  
As common clay or stone;  
Surely she passed, that pale voice seemed  
Hers, surely she was nigh?  
But O my heart! how once she gleamed  
That now mere doubt flits by!

### *The English Poets*

I LOOKED across the fields and saw a light  
Abroad through all the morning earth and air,  
A hue of heaven!—I thought it common sight;  
Was radiant thence and dreamed all people were.

A hue of heaven! or passion of old earth,  
Triumphant in the pastoral long played there,  
Memory of wakes and wooings and May mirth  
When Lear was young; so shone my earth and air.

Yet to no words I set my revery;  
Loved well the landscape, but as though its prime  
For all eyes bloomed from cloud and shepherd's tree,  
For me would bloom, as trees would, all my time—

Till years had changed my gazing. Then as one  
Wakes from a dream and sighing would renew  
The happy dream, but then! it is clean gone,  
I knew my loss, I sighed for the darling hue.

How many doting eyes of poets dead  
Have known and lost the Spirit of this sweet land  
Who to young wonder glows! and as I read,  
Longing in past enchanted vales to stand,

From pages hid away by time, or crowned  
With timeless laurels, oft on a sudden arose  
The mist of magic, and old haunted ground  
Shone with the Spirit who to young wonder glows.

Soon come, soon gone! and yet the brief disclose  
Sweetened my days, and in desire I grew  
The constant suppliant and the friend of those  
From whose love's annals, known to all or few,

By virtue of that true and earnest love,  
The wandering light might kindle here and there;  
In halt harsh phrase or Muses' treasure-trove,  
In warmest ecstasy or recountings bare.

And shall I ever pass the humblest name  
Of honest English song for England sung,  
When from the uncouth shrine to me might flame  
The spirit fire that keeps our England young?

## *The Old Year*

THE moon was going down; the empty trees shook, sighing,  
The frost breath in the grasses sere  
Made joyless anthem; one more year  
Was dying.

Abroad a smuggled light, a luckless light was waning  
Over the houses hushed, and I  
Stood numbed, with neither love nor sigh  
Remaining.

## *First Rhymes*

IN the meadow by the mill  
I'd make my ballad,  
Tunes to that would whistle shrill  
And beat the blackbird's ringing bill.  
But surely the innocent spring has died,  
The sultry noon has hushed the bird,  
The jingling word, the turn and glide  
All in that meadow must have died.  
For that, the fuller speech of song  
Has charmed me,  
And lulled my lonely hours along;  
Though beauty's truth that leads to-day  
My longing trials  
Shone then like dewdrops in my way  
When "Nature painted all things gay."

## *Inheritance*

AH! what magic was that, and what the mystery  
In the Suffolk maiden's look that swiftly enchanted me,  
And held me prisoner? Love that could never be,  
For love for me had long since left his celestial tree—  
Never from those boughs would the bright wings flash again.

Standing and trembling, I in silence shone to  
The unknown divine look, and when she was gone too  
The countenance-light yet mastered my being,  
And all the garden round was lost to my seeing—  
There was but this dynasty, where, gods, and when?

God-seeking, bold, laborious, earth's companions,  
That long ago triumphing made the plough's dominions,  
Ladies whose lovely faith the long years stormed not,  
These all in one met, ghost-glowing, formed not  
These the chance-come charm that bade me worship then?



## *Thames Gulls*

BEAUTIFUL it is to see  
On London Bridge the bold-eyed seabirds wheel,  
And hear them cry, and all for a light-flung crust  
Fling us their wealth, their freedom, speed and gleam.

And beautiful to see  
Them that pass by lured by these birds to stay,  
And smile and say "how tame they are"—how tame!  
Friendly as stars to steersmen in mid seas,  
And as remote as midnight's darling stars,  
Pleasant as voices heard from days long done,  
As nigh the hand as windflowers in the woods,  
And inaccessible as Dido's phantom.

## *Masks of Time*

THEN the Lark, his singing on a sudden done,  
Fell through crystal sunrays to his twilight bed;  
Then the woods as sharp and carved as Parthenon  
Stood before charmed eyes for ever; time was dead.

Now is haste returned; the striding fury flings  
That mad mantle abroad, and foots both Pole and path.  
Swarming grasses hiss: pursue wild beaks and wings;  
The clods roll their brown heads, all Golgotha in wrath.

## *Achronos*

THE trunks of trees which I knew glorious green,  
Which I saw felled last year, already show  
Rust-red their rounds; the twisting path between  
Takes its new way already plain as though  
It went this way since years and years ago.  
The plough I saw my friend so often guide,  
Snapped on the sly snag at the spinney side,

Lies rusting there where brambles overflow;  
As gulfed in limbo lake as buried coins,  
Which, once both bread and wine, now nothing mean.  
The spider dates it not but spins in the heat,  
For what's time past? but present time is sweet.  
Think, in that churchyard lies fruit of our loins—  
The child who bright as pearl shone into breath  
With the Egyptian's first-born shares coeval death.

### *A Transcription*

"THIS young man comes from your way, Tom."

At this

The old thin silent fellow on the sack,  
Who turned some pages with a face of lead,  
Clapt eyes on me. His quivering jaw released  
Words sere and rambling as November leaves.  
"You come from my way. . . . Ah, I used to know  
Sturmere, New England, Stoke, the Valley Arms.  
'Tis forty years ago. 'Tis changed, no doubt.  
Yes, I knew all them places."

Here the master

Of the old-clothes shop pointed me again,  
"He went a-cricketin' out to Stoke Whit-Monday.  
"Cricketin'? Ah, there warn't no cricket then,  
Except the boys might take a bat at nights.  
The men ne'er played no cricket nor no quoits  
Nor football. Tenpins—that was all there was."  
And pausing, he gave ear to something afar  
And suddenly heard what made his words ring out.  
"But we had music in the churches then,  
The clar'net on a Sunday used to play  
In Sturmere church—and as the sayen is,  
The clar'net used to sound like HEAVEN ON EARTH."  
O Love, your anthem reached the dealer's den,  
The rags and rubbish thence all-glorious shone.  
And he again: "There's no such music now,  
There's nothen now for nobody, only sorrow."

## *Harvest*

So there's my year, the twelvemonth duly told  
Since last I climbed this brow and gloated round  
Upon the lands heaped with their wheaten gold,  
And now again they spread with wealth imbrowned—  
And thriftless I meanwhile,  
What honeycombs have I to take, what sheaves to pile?

I see some shrivelled fruits upon my tree,  
And gladly would self-kindness feign them sweet;  
The bloom smelled heavenly, can these stragglers be  
The fruit of that bright birth? and this wry wheat,  
Can this be from those spires  
Which I, or fancy, saw leap to the spring sun's fires?

I peer, I count, but anxious is not rich,  
My harvest is not come, the weeds run high;  
Even poison-berries ramping from the ditch  
Have stormed the undefended ridges by;  
What Michaelmas is mine!  
The fields I thought to serve, for sturdier tillage pine.

But, hush—Earth's valleys sweet in leisure lie;  
And I among them wandering up and down  
Will taste their berries, like the bird or fly,  
And of their gleanings make both feast and crown.  
The Sun's eye laughing looks.  
And Earth accuses none that goes among her stooks.

## *A Dream*

UNRIDDLE this. Last night my dream  
Took me along a sullen stream,  
A water drifting black and ill,  
With idiot swirls, and silent still.  
As if it had been Pactolus

And I of gold sands amorous  
I went determined on its bank,  
Stopped in that breath of dim and dank,  
And in my hand (in dream's way) took  
A living fish to bait my hook,  
A living fish, not gudgeon quite  
Nor dace nor roach, a composite.  
Then ghoulishly with fingers, yet  
With aching mind, I strove to get  
The pang of shackling metal through  
The mouth of that poor mad perdu,  
And (ran the bitter fancy's plot)  
To tie his body in a knot.  
While thus I groped and grasped and coiled  
And he in horror flapped and foiled,  
I saw how on the clay around  
Young shining fishes leapt and clowned,  
And often turned their eyes on me,  
Begging their watery liberty,  
Most sad and odd. But, thought I, now  
I have no time for helping you.  
And then at length my bait was hooked,  
His shuddering tail grotesquely crooked:  
Black was the secret-dimpling stream,  
I flounced him to the line's extreme.  
And then, his mercy, gladdening me  
Who just had been his agony,  
Some monstrous mouth beat out his brain,  
The line cut wide its graphs of strain.  
I knew my prize, and fought my best  
With thought and thew—then the fight ceased.  
Sobbing I feared the quarry gone,  
But no, the deadweight showed him on,  
Slow to the mould I pulled the huge  
Half-legend from his subterfuge,  
And as he from the water thrust  
His head, and cleared its scurf and must,  
Two eyes as old as Adam stared

On mine. And now he lay unbarred:  
My glory!—On the bleak bank lay  
A carcass effigy in clay,  
A trunk of vague and lethal mass  
Such as might lie beneath filmed glass,  
Where on the pane the buzzing fly  
Batters to win the desperate sky.

## *A Bridge*

“BEYOND the church there stands a bridge,”  
The greyhead said in his thin moan,  
“And the river below’s nor quick nor slow,  
And the green weed waves beside his stone.”

The summer’s dust in curling gust  
Had floured me like a miller’s man,  
And on the hot bridge-wall I leant  
To watch how sweet the water ran.

Then all things crumbled, with a roar  
Mountains of waters champed and hurled;  
The sluices crashed and deluge flashed  
And spun me through a gasping world

Of black and green heads breaking loose,  
With hideous bubbles, bolting eyes,  
And rage and race, and white grimace,  
And sidelong monstrous agonies.

Then sick and scarlet wheeled the sun  
Above a slackened seething flood,  
And in red creeks poked fish with beaks,  
And shell-strong claws scooped the swart mud,

And congregate in sharkish hate  
Hundreds of demon slayers basked  
In the mid gulf, scaled thunder-bronze,  
And their swift brains one victim asked.

“Why, there you see the bridge again,”  
The grey ghost said. “How time has flown!  
The pools lie clear this time of year,  
And the green weed’s lazy beside his stone.”

### *Strange Perspective*

HAPPY the herd is that in the heat of summer  
Wades in the waters where the willows cool them,  
From murmuring midday that sings the meadow,  
And turns very tansies, fire-flowers, tindery.  
Naked at noon there, naughtiness too wantons,  
From bank bold jumping, and bough down dandling,  
Of chimed hour chainless and churlish duty.  
I see the glad set, who am far off sentenced;  
Their lily limbs dazzle over long dry pastures;  
And rude though ridges are risen between us,  
Miles of mountains morosely upthrusting,  
And dim and downward my gaze now droops,  
My pool beyond pasture by a strange perspective  
Is plain, and plunging its playmates gleam,  
Hustling the staid herd into hazardous shadows.

### *Omen*

Now the day is dead, I cried,  
The sky stretched mute and mortified,  
The sun gone, the clouds biding,  
The first stars in dungeons hiding.  
Lantern venturing its short glow,  
I went to put the lodge doors to,  
And tiffing there heard hardly aware

A harsh high harmony along the air—  
Some steel-bit fox in the western wood,  
The mind's rote idly understood—  
And yet that wild voice rose and grew  
Until I stood and strained for a view.  
Dogs in kennels began to bark,  
"There's queer things love this kind of dark";  
And here it comes creeping yelp on yelp,  
Along the hedge to us for help;  
The wood-child with man's torture racked  
Dares seek him out, if he'll retract.

No fox was this. Ho, look to the air!  
The greyness showed a wonder there;  
Piteous sobbing in an instant grown  
The round of one man-careless tone.  
A wave of wild geese there was flying,  
Antheming what just seemed pain's crying,  
All the swishing wings straight steering,  
East in a solemn progress bearing;  
Majesty with these was going,  
Music in that shrill clangour flowing.  
East went the god-disclosing flight.  
I shut my doors up for the night.

## *Elegy*

THE Chinese tombs,  
Some, squares of shrubby trees, some, peaks and mounds,  
But more like tile-roofed huts and cottages,  
Rise here and there among the fertile grounds.

The spring day blooms  
Palely above them, and a warm tear falls  
At moments from her opening eyes upon

Those hillocks and those walls;  
The encircling wheat and beans as yet are wan,  
With the dim stress of winter hardly gone;

The green corn waves  
With the thin wind in its tall shroudage flowing,  
Above those graves; the living labourer's hoeing  
Ends at those graves.

## *Old Pleasures Deserted*

COBWEBS and kisks have crept  
On what so smiled, so shone, so smiled;  
Fen-gotten fogs have wept,  
Rust and moth have ate and slept,  
Foul-coiling growths defiled.

Morn's golden sandals lie  
Slouched and unnoted; moiled in weed,  
Diana's silver archery  
Sails no shrill wind; Pan's maiden-reed  
Is sunk to atoms grey and dry;  
Those flowers that lost Persephone  
Left in the sun, are shrunk to screed.

There were stones and shells  
That a god brought me from a brook,  
They gleamed as miracles,  
They're now—I dare not look.  
By a clear green pool a kingfisher flew,  
Left with me an angel's plume;  
Where greybirds sang cool orchards through  
I found a flute that put forth bloom.

Michael's plume, flowery flute  
Were here, and thousand beauties more;  
Beneath this shroud of disrepute,  
These scurfs and soilings, lay rich store:  
But creeping on, the shade of death  
Has changed this air;  
Gaspingly I take my breath.



Yet did you dare,  
Through this hushed and kisky den  
Find them you might,  
And touch them into truth again  
May-morning bright.

## *Unteachable*

To some, thoughts flying into futurity's cloud;  
To some, pale provings mocking time and space;  
To some, the puzzling out to-day's hoarse crowd;  
To each his own: I run a backward race.

I have been wandering distant roads, have striven  
To win new comprehensions; much in vain.  
There's that within me cares not what is given  
By such migrations; of a stubborn grain,

This Hodge-like serf and tyrant trudges on,  
Grudges and growls at all my innovations,  
Lets new things go to rack when I am gone  
On other errands, sticks to's old vocations.

*Caelum, non animum*—nay, scarce he'll see  
An altered sky, and this, all said and done,  
I like him for; he'll sit by his old tree,  
To eat his bit of dinner, out of the sun.

## *Bells*

WHAT master singer, with what glory amazed,  
Heard one day listening on the lonely air  
The tune of bells ere yet a bell was raised  
To throne it over field and flood? Who dare  
Deny him demi-god, that so could win  
The music uncreate, that so could wed

Music and hue—till, when the bells begin,  
Song colours, colour sings? Beauty so bred  
Ensppheres each hamlet through the English shires,  
And utters from ten thousand peeping spires  
(Or huge in starlight) to the outmost farms  
Sweet, young, grand, old. The country's lustiest arms  
Leap to the time till the whole sky retells  
That unknown poet's masterpiece of bells.

### *"Thy Dreams Ominous"*

BLEST is the man that sees and hears  
The shuttles of the eternal weaver,  
And shrieks not, sobs not savage tears,  
Burns not with fever.  
He is a tree that's finely planted  
Where a plunging cataract blanches,  
Spreading there as though enchanted  
His lucky branches.

But what if I, whose different thews  
Scarce bear the dawning light unwincing,  
Discovered in some curious clues  
Vision commencing?  
I should be driftwood, moon and sun  
In gulping, groaning water-gorges  
Sucked down, shot high, and snatched and spun  
Through timeless orgies.

### *Rue du Bois*

HARMONIOUS trees, whose lit and lissom graces  
For ever brighten on my hastening eye,  
Calmed by whose leisure, by whose great griefs raptured,  
I cared not if the word were live or die,

Oh that I might with kisses and caresses  
Reveal that love to you, most lovely Powers,  
And like the sun or trembling dew be welcome,  
And see no winter to our green amours!

This heart that glows at myriad-mantled beauty  
And at a gleam in voice or touch or eye  
Is lost and lisping, dazzled and disastered,  
This heart the plaything of the Passing By—

O could it but be held by these wood-wonders,  
That time but gently, gently shine and sing!  
Death first! and even in death this heart, dust-crumbled,  
Will never give an aspen to the spring.

### *Prodigal*

THE stream runs on with speed and leisure too,  
Is voice and silence both; be you that stream.  
The sylvan sunbeam finds the moss and dew,  
And gilds but mars them not; be you that beam.  
O see, my treasure, from our tread  
How the brave grass lifts its meek head.

“In heaven like southern seas immense and blue  
Spring clouds laugh changing, changing, dazzling deep  
With wonders’ masquerade; rich-tongued anew  
The foreign birds are come, young salmon leap  
In snowy splendours; through the copse  
Favonian wings brush the bright drops.”

The stream runs on, and I have loved to lie  
Prone at its cressy brink and drink and hear,  
The time will come when, at the point to die,  
I’ll wish a spirit-stream as cool and clear;  
But be till then the birds in May,  
The splendid fish, the violet day.

## *Reliques*

MAP me the World, and watch you mark  
The tall peak poising Noah's ark;  
Let the North Light's red pillar flare  
Past Greenland stretched like a great bear:  
Cosmographate with master quill,  
Let chub-cheeked Boreas bluster still,  
And on the curled main here descry  
Some Golden Vanity, nor deny  
A glaring and most monstrous whale  
To flourish there his famous tail.  
Nor grudge the Cham his turrets, nor  
The Pythoness's den ignore;  
Engrave as plain as Bury Fair  
Magellan's Clouds, the faithful pair  
That ever float with one white soul  
Not twenty leagues from the South Pole.

I will not rail, I will not rant,  
If you admire that hungry plant  
The Borametz, in Scythia found,  
That stooping crops the grass all round,  
Sharpset as some young lamb: I see  
With you that in furred Muscovy  
Some mirrors lighten with the moon,  
Horned, halvèd, gibbous, at full noon.  
Nor do you scorn our own chalk cliffs:  
Nebulgea makes dumb all "ifs":  
With that heaven fats each meadow stone,  
Their strange increase: such is well known.  
So Kentish men once had fish tails  
And hell-becks count their dead in Wales,  
Shrews bite a bull, he shrivels away,  
And the birds choose mates on Valentine's day.

Hermetical my aidant be,  
And answer in your chymistry;  
Produce us Salamander's Blood,

And Salt of Saturn, whether good  
Or not so good for wens or kibes,  
Bring Golden Sulphur's active tribes;  
*In balneo Mariae* get the bubbles  
To rectify my cystick troubles.  
Forget not *Bezoardicum*  
*Lunale*, or I'm poisoned numb.  
Or would you, as some wiser hold,  
From herbs allure the charming gold,  
And gauging by wild-wine degrees  
Moisten my hot-tongued helodes,  
Enliquoring milch May-lilies well  
With tincture of blue pimpernel?

Then let me steal through timeless groves  
And be no more what passion moves:  
There Agnus Castus, angel tree,  
The verdant of virginity,  
Must silver all her starry leaves  
And let fall down the climbless cleaves  
One leaf for me; or were it best  
To lie and fill my venomed breast  
With Manchinello's deadly sleep  
And run like murder down the steep?  
And there's a wreathed tree which woos  
A weeping cloud; the kind tears ooze  
And opiate thence; no richer mist  
Perfumes the primal arborist;  
Yet still I fly with barbed desire  
To find that thorn which flowers quick fire.

But from this travel newly come  
I hear the trainbands beat the drum;  
And war is loosed! Then let me view  
The lines which martial artists drew;  
Where round the staired and steepled town  
The ramparts and the embrasures frown,  
The hornwork thrusts its double spikes,  
The lunette tops the drowning dykes,

The covert-way surrounding lurks,  
The ravelins lock the neighbouring works.  
This perfect flower and pearl of arms  
Fears not the forlorn-hope's alarms  
And cannot ever be blown away,  
Though culverins and bombards play;  
Its banners dancing in the sun  
Announce the eternal heptagon.

Fantastic and most sweet revival,  
Land and sea that has no rival,  
Where the dogs that baying meet  
On moonlit hills and sheep that bleat  
Are in a tale, and shepherd knows  
The air is full of elf-arrows!  
The yellow shafts of thunderous light  
Fall lonely there on moorland height  
Whence half a summer's ride is viewed,  
A majesty of solitude.  
There the roan horse is understood,  
Though distance hides in blackening wood,  
The stars above the region know  
Who's born and with him natural go,  
And mathematics, fresh as May,  
Will square the circle one bright day.

*“There is a Country”*

WHILE thus the black night rushes down in rain,  
And the long-sighing wind drives on the showers,  
I face the flood, and cool and love my brain  
With drinking in this wine of all wild flowers,  
This cold sharp castaly, this leaping vein  
Of spirit blood; here where the hill cloud lowers,  
I, an iota, atom, mote, and grain,  
May revel in this torrent God for hours.

And would some vision of eternal springs  
That gladden peerless hills might flash on me,  
Who now their echo hear, their shadow see!  
Whose memory with such sweet and simple things,  
By this night's rains, is rich—returning wings,  
Building and singing, in every leafing tree.

### *The Brook*

Up, my jewel! let's away  
There where none but young love lingers;  
Bells are ringing folks to pray,  
But ours are older bells and ringers,  
Where the stream's broken gleams  
Glance through tresses of green willow,  
Fishes glide, and beside  
Flowers laugh, blue, white and yellow.

On this bridge 'tis good to lean,  
Cooling care with the dance and dripple,  
Nor do you your lovelight screen  
But outgleam the dimpling ripple:  
Minim waves, nutshell caves,  
Cataracts over pebbles hurling,  
To whose falls on the walls  
Myriad mimic suns go twirling!

But what dying dying fall,  
What low ebbing syllables  
Hear I now? what ghosts recall  
Their shadowing piteous chronicles?  
O my dear! this pale fear—  
Sun so cold, so dark! O never—  
My life stream's broken gleams  
Stolen into the gulf for ever!

## *The Spell*

LOUD the wind leaps through the night and fills the valley with his  
wings,  
The bleak fields not a furlong hence, in such black hours as  
these,  
Terrify, so lonely grown; the rain sweeps down to swell the  
springs  
And beats about the happy house where I may take my ease,  
And beats with fury far and near  
The fields of loneliness and fear.

In the still decline that led the blind year to his Calvary,  
We have walked among the woods and on a sudden heard,  
When not a tremor stole through air, the deadly fall from some  
one tree  
Of leaves that knew the time and answered God's unspoken  
word.  
So seems it now with me, my own  
Is vacant all: I must be gone.

This might be that selfsame night when good King Lear was  
running wild  
Over the hoarse unglimmering heath, and glorious met the  
storm;  
His white hair had been my torch, for now I know myself beguiled  
By impulse nameless from the hearth, where I might huddle  
warm,  
In tooth of all the storms that ever  
Were, to rove the wild lands over.

*“Art thou gone in haste?”*

THAT I might watch the bells of wild bloom swing  
And hear them ring  
I travelled many a road when life was spring  
And many a brown holt knew:  
Then too the waters of the twinkling ford



Were mine, all mine the outlet sprang and poured  
    Its laughing light and dew.  
The stealth of silent lakes in their dim fourms,  
    The honour of the hills confronting Jove  
With brows of brightness, even to his splendid storms  
    Unflinching, reckoning his eagle lightnings love,  
    I scanned, and hoarded every flush and hue.

O firmament, O mountain-headed march  
    Of clouds through that blue arch,  
O flashing wings and dancing matin-beams,  
    And O, below Jove's dome,  
    My Oberon's house and home,  
Wren-nested hedges, bell-flowered copse, clear streams!  
I passed, and now in vain a mocking shade pursue.

### *To Joy*

Is not this enough for moan  
To see this babe all motherless—  
A babe beloved—thrust out alone  
    Upon death's wilderness?  
Our tears fall, fall, fall—I would weep  
My blood away to make her warm,  
Who never went on earth one step,  
    Nor heard the breath of the storm.  
How shall you go, my little child,  
Alone on that most wintry wild?

### *The Aftermath*

SWIFT away the century flies,  
    Time has yet the wind for wings,  
In the past the midnight lies;  
    But my morning never springs.  
  
Who goes there? come, ghost or man,  
    You were with us, you will know;

Let us commune, there's no ban  
On speech for us if we speak low.

Time has healed the wound, they say,  
Gone's the weeping and the rain;  
Yet you and I suspect, the day  
Will never be the same again.

Is it day? I thought there crept  
Some frightened pale rays through the fog,  
And where the lank black ash-trees wept  
I thought the birds were just agog.

But no, this fiction died before  
The swirling gloom, as soon as seen;  
The thunder's brow, the thunder's roar,  
Darkness that's felt strode swift between.

O euphrasy for ruined eyes!  
I chose, it seemed, a flowering thorn;  
The white blooms were but brazen lies,  
The tree I looked upon was torn

In snarling lunacy of pain,  
A brown charred trunk that deadly cowered,  
And when I stared across the plain  
Where once the gladdening green hill towered,

It shone a second, then the greed  
Of death had fouled it; dark it stood,  
A hump of wilderness untreed  
Where the kind Dove would never brood.

## *To Nature*

O my stern mother, aye, in that name loved,  
Who gave me life and all its greenest fields,  
And yet to counterchange the simple joy  
Gave me this braih, whose luck it seems to be

Ever to labour like a winnowing dudge,  
But blind, unknowing if it beat in vain,  
Unknowing what is truth, for the secret truth  
Straining in pallor all my waking hours,  
And even in dreams with worse shadow encircled,  
How this late noonday lights your sibyl's brow!

For now so calm and tender rest the pastures,  
And now so sweet the distant sun looks down,  
And russet lands lie gleaming, so serene  
They colour to the plough—your thought's known there.  
The patient ploughing horses, mates so kind,  
In whose white foreheads surely wisdom lives  
Unquestioned, in this hour bring me to tears  
And I must shield my eyes and turn away.

Mysterious mother, I in your strange glances  
Have long been wandering lonely; now I see  
The earth new dug, how clean and quiet lying!  
And since I find my life driven on, on, on  
Like poor hare running till her heart is broken,  
Nor do you check the fiends, if fiends they are,  
Now show them as my foolish dreams, if dreams,  
I long to hide me deep in your brown earth,  
That will not ask whose is the flesh it turns  
To its own likeness, but with vast good will  
Receives, and bids be calm as it is calm.

### *To Clare*

THOU toddling babe, none looks upon but loves,  
And feels life brighter for looking on thee,  
Thy gaze I'll remember and treasure as a charm  
When cloudy days are come upon me,  
Thy eyes as steady as the pretty ringdove's,  
That nigh the broken hatch, agen the lonely farm,  
On a still sunny morning of winter we see.

## *A Psalm*

O God, in whom my deepest being dwells,  
Unasking what Thy form or mind may be,  
Hear once again the sighing trust that wells  
From my late wildered breast, and comfort me!  
I call, I call from this long vale of tears,  
I lift my eyes to the hills, there fancying Thee:  
O Thou whose whim-or wisdom shapes the spheres,  
Yet be my temple and kind sanctuary!

The ages like an army without end  
Go conquering on, and lay rich trophies by,  
Their cities triumph and their fanes extend,  
In their strong rooms the taken mysteries lie.  
But thence does earth put on a lovelier hue?  
Does their light hearten, or but terrify?  
Fast cometh on my enemy anew,  
And Bashan's arrows darken all the sky.

Thence as a bird, as that poor wood-pigeon,  
Which with shot wings from the curst gunner flees  
Through the wild scowling evening on and on  
And finds a mercy in some secret trees,  
I fly to Thee; I lodge me in those boughs  
Which shadowed through the hottest tyrannies  
Thy early shepherds; then refreshed I rouse,  
Spring through white skies, and light in flowering leas.

Reason, still mining in her rocks and reefs,  
Is still refining; fancy paints as Thee  
A witenagemote of dæmon chiefs  
For ever vying; forces not to see.  
But nothing better than my fathers, I  
Hear rather the heart's summons and go free  
From all the heartless claims that multiply,  
And still Thee Father call, and come to Thee.

Then though the light of the age far off reveal  
Some tragic theme, and doubt grow doubly strong,  
I happy am; I dare and need to kneel  
To One who tuned great David's life to song.  
My prayer, no more than not to lose that dew  
And dawn that failed not yet my path along:  
O God that Abraham and our Vaughan knew,  
Hide not Thyself, let first love prove not wrong.

### *The Death-Mask of John Clare*

KIND was the hand that at the last  
This mortal likeness drew,  
And more than kindness took the cast—  
'Twas prophecy, come true.

Doubt surely questioned, why record  
This old forgotten face?  
But after-time with love's reward  
Has blessed the act of grace.

So, Clare, your rich, sweet, serious gaze  
Meets me through sixty years,  
Now sets my wonderment ablaze,  
Now fascinates my tears.

I think when young you blushed among  
The gay town's curious eyes;  
How tripped the truth from beauty's tongue,  
"A noble in disguise!"

God's noble, slave of earth, upraised  
To bright conception's song,  
And by the world down dashed and dazed,  
How held you out so long?

For even the raven's young, you said,  
Are answered when they cry,  
But when your children wanted bread,  
At length the stony sky

Seemed all one frown! the tired mind groaned  
Defeat day after day,  
And purpose to the dust'dethroned  
In riddles mocked the play.

Then from loved fields, from wife, from child,  
You helplessly were haled;  
Where the thronged mad high heaven reviled  
Was freedom's friend enjailed.

Twenty dim years you lived where some  
Gnash ivy from the wall,  
And other shrieking, others dumb  
With their dark dæmons brawl.

Still welcomed you the bee and bird  
In morning's crystal dew,  
Still garlanded with spring-like word  
Spring's "gold yminted new."

A thrall, you reached the allotted span,  
Your countenance wore no sign  
Of your Bastille, you looked the Man,  
Serene and nigh divine.

Came death; the boundary wall was cleft,  
Green pastures mile on mile  
Gleamed flowers your childhood knew, you left  
Your prison with a smile.

## *Intimations of Mortality*

—I AM only the phrase  
Of an unknown musician;  
By a gentle voice spoken  
I stole forth and met you  
In halcyon days.

Yet, frail as I am, you yourself shall be broken  
Before we are parted; I have but one mission:  
Till death to beset you.

—I am only the glowing  
Of a dead afternoon,  
When you, full of wonder,  
Your hand in your mother's,  
Up great streets were going.  
Pale was my flame, and the cold sun fell under  
The blue heights of houses; but I shall gleam on  
In your life past all others.

—I am only the bloom  
Of an apple-tree's roses,  
That stooped to the grass  
Where the robins were nesting  
In an old vessel's womb.  
Dead is the tree, and your steps may not pass  
The place where it smiled; but I'll come, till death closes  
My ghostly molesting.

—You phantoms, pursue me,  
Be upon me, amaze me,  
Though nigh all your presence  
With sorrow enchant me,  
In sorrow renew me!  
Songless and gleamless I near no new pleasance,  
In subtle returnings of ecstasy raise me,  
To my winding-sheet haunt me!

## *Thus Far*

IN glades where frost is ambushed in the ferns,  
In the low meadow dipping to the stream,  
A luring light and subtle beauty burns,  
And now I see and now have lost the gleam;  
The water sings, its crystal body curls  
With welling music round the root and stone,  
But a voice haunts there, clear above the swirls,  
And now I catch and now I miss that tone.

Spring, light of light; stay not so shyly far,  
Maybe a dream, maybe a living truth;  
Voice that was there, attend that sudden star,  
And in one fountain song say you are youth,  
Or love, or some remembrance—

Ah, that prayer,

Answered, would leave but wood and water there.

## *The Flower-Gatherers*

WHERE a brook with lispings tongue  
Through the lonelier meadows sung,  
And woodnotes mingled silver showers,  
Mother and child were picking flowers,  
Were picking flowers blue, cool and gay,  
And answering each the other's play:

Ah, slow, sweet hours!  
Go with them in those fearless bowers,  
And you, kind sun,  
Forget the arc you yet must run.

A ringlet, which the golden wind  
Had spirited and unconfined,  
The mother from her brow put by  
And starting looked up at the sky:  
There a pale cloudiness crept on,



Low whispering, time to get her gone:  
Then no sweet hours  
Can loiter in the merriest bowers,  
Nor yon good sun  
Can stop the wheels that change made run?

And soon beyond the church and hill  
Mother and child had passed, but still  
Chance-dropt from warm young fingers lay  
Forget-me-nots along the way.  
The broken day has long since died,  
And change has grown in power and pride,  
Yet those sweet hours,  
Strange luck, are loitering in those bowers,  
And that charmed sun  
Forgets he had a course to run.

## *The Deep*

I ASK but little; and I ask far more  
Than aught but infinite love and mind could give;  
Sometimes to steal away as heretofore  
Where a small stream and slender willows live.  
The shed leaves glide begolden to that stream  
Held in a pool, like music in the breast;  
As those leaves sink, there sinks my life adream,  
So cool-delaying, darkening down to rest.

And more I ask, and mine it is—to see  
Sweet faces that are part apart of me,  
The red-lipped mystery of a smiling child,  
Where I may ponder till the charm have won  
Past-pondering deeps, untimed by the stern sun,  
And with those red lips Peace herself have smiled.

## *Now or Never*

BRIGHT fleet slow shadow! puzzling guide,  
Smile not so fatal-strange, nor glide  
Magnetically on and on;  
Am I but your automaton?  
O ghostly cruel pride!

From this fine orchard, branches sprawl  
And bigarreus and blackhearts fall;  
Your violet eye has bid me clutch  
Those cherries, and before I touch  
They're dew, and soft you call.

The ivied covert is so sweet  
That garlands you from gascon heat,  
And yet your lip interprets not  
That I dare love the hermit grot,  
The faded counterfeit!

False cry; for well I saw the wood,  
And on hurt brows put its cold hood,  
And would have rested on the moss  
To watch the moth and moonbeam cross  
The path where you had stood.

But now you were, and I was, thence  
In rosy dawn's magnificence,  
While a young girl, that did not speak,  
Stared long; the roses of her cheek  
Beside the wild-rose fence!

She was, she is not; you are here,  
Moves your strange smile to chill or cheer?  
It subtly stirs, or seems, and yet  
Read day by day 'tis firmly set,  
Stirs, stirs not year on year.

The old house with its deep green glass  
Looks, sheds tranquillity; airy grass  
Sunlit by basking chimney sways,  
The baby on the threshold plays.  
I gaze, tremble and pass.

### *Warning to Troops*

WHAT soldier guessed that where the stream descended  
In country dance beneath the colonnade  
Of elms which cooled the halted troop, it played  
Sly music, barely noted, never ended?  
Or who, from war's concerns a moment missed,  
At some church door turned white as came to him  
One gold note struck by the hidden organist,  
One note long-drawn through caverns cool and dim?

O marcher, hear. But when thy route and tramp  
Pause by some falling stream, or holy door,  
Be the deaf adder; bear not back to camp  
That embryo music. Double not thy war.  
Shun all such sweet prelude. March, sing, roar,  
Lest perilous silence gnaw thee evermore.

### *To a Spirit*

DEAR (thus I dare), how I have longed  
To double, treble, nay, to see  
Past computation bloomed and thronged  
The love of thee that raptures me:  
O were I capable to clasp  
Thee with the serene energy,  
The more than wrestling-Jacob grasp  
Wherewith souls once took hold of thee!

O rosy courage, soft resolve  
That pinior ed thee so amorous fast—  
Thither my passions now convolve  
And yearn to whelm thee so at last!  
When shall I meet thee on the mead  
Where kingcups fawn about thy feet  
And by some ivied fountain lead  
To tell thee that I find thee sweet?

When the stormæd sky forgot its scars  
And sunset calmed to thy red smile,  
When I have watched the veil of stars  
And thought thy glance shone out awhile,  
Even when three golden apples hung  
In winter dusk from a dim stem,  
I knew thee ever blithe and young,  
The poet smiling over them.

And over mountains lusted clear  
If some have hailed thee, may not I?  
In thy own crystal atmosphere  
Thy beauty will come glittering by.  
As by a sedgy brook I came  
On some great white bird unaware,  
So in the morning's lonely flame  
I'll spy thee with thy streaming hair.

Confused and gross in this my cry,  
Let me not lose thee, loving so;  
So, thou for once art less than I,  
I, mortal, will not let thee go.  
Or else, deny this oak, whose bough  
Lets honeyed light steal in to rest  
Upon thy contemplating brow  
That calms the chaffinch on her nest.

Or else, uproot these daisies: beat  
The brook's live emerald till it's null,  
Tear down this dancing meadowsweet,  
Make this hare's fur unbeautiful.

What wouldst thou have, sweet spirit, who  
Hast lured me with so many a spell?  
Thou smilest deep, thou me: nest true—  
What, if not love, I cannot tell.

## *The Message*

THEN in petals of the air,  
In clouds that roses rather were,  
In blue pools of the tranquil sky,  
In summer ether calm and high,  
With ripe and budding blossom smiling,  
Haunted new and meek beguiling.

Then although that sky looked down  
On shattered church and crazy town,  
On bodies hurt and left in heaps,  
On vigils pale and carnal sleeps,  
It tinged a flush of phantom rose  
And yearned with its divine disclose.

Whose that radiance, whose that whisper,  
Zephyr-glimmer, voice of Hesper?  
Then unknown! the mystery pure  
Sparkled in the vast colure  
A message from a far hill sheening,  
Yet no lens could meet its meaning.

After-time has seemed to prove  
What the signal twinkled: Love,  
Love that hovering ever nearer  
Soon in one beloved was clearer,  
Who with me in one path moving  
Was the secret's rosy proving.

That reels and whirs, and never drops,  
That still is going;  
For quicksand not an instant stops  
Its deadly flowing.

And is Joy up and dancing there  
Where deepening blue  
Asks a new star? is that her hair  
There freshed with dew?

Here, O the skull of some small wretch,  
Some slaughtered jot,  
And bones like bits of hated quitch  
Recount fate's plot.

So lies thy skull? This earth, even this  
Like quicksand weaves.  
Sleep well, my darling, though I kiss  
Lime or dead leaves.

Sleep in the flux as on the breast,  
In the vortex loll;  
In mid simoom, my innocence, rest;  
In lightning's soul

Bower thyself! But, joyous eyes,  
The deeps drag dull—  
O morning smile and song, so lies  
Thy tiny skull?

### *Byroad*

Who knows not that sweet gloom in spring,  
That waiting gloom, that grave delight  
In coming bloom,  
In the first flight  
Of bird, or thought, so wild of wing?

Now when round hedgerow's earthy claws  
And painted shells that blanch near by  
    The dark grass swells  
    And from the eye  
In buds each old black nest withdraws,

I well might go to my old haunt  
And find the green brook brushing down  
    By celandine  
    And sedges brown  
And hoppers' houses grimed and gaunt.

I well might go where the burnt ring  
And rusty kettles year on year  
    Show life has yet  
    Her freedoms dear—  
And I will go, another spring.

It may be, I shall then unfold  
Why with such thrill and venturous joy  
    I crossed that rill,  
    A hurrying boy,  
One Lenten Sunday ages old.

The mild mysterious spring was there,  
The silk palm glowed, the vole peeped shy  
    Beside the road  
    Where you and I  
Went on and blest the orchard air.

Then coming to the timbered cot  
Of your good friend, how deep it strook  
    That he would lend  
    His longed-for book,  
Old Walton, which forthwith he got,

And by the window gave to me.  
The apples in the window-sill,  
    His humorous chin,  
    I see them still;  
I see his good wife getting tea.

But where's the mystery? There it was;  
And is it there? And can I find  
    Spring's dusk so fair  
    Now that this mind  
Looks far beyond such floating floss?

O look not out; the young spring broods  
Too wondering-warm on nest and bough,  
    Her dark eyes charm,  
    Her babe leaps now,  
And godhead glistens in those woods.

### *Resentients*

HEART of great hopes, glance of arriving day,  
Step of sure lightness, voice as crystalline  
As music on the waters, come away,  
And shun this cranked and cogged and loud machine;  
Whose dusty motion too long looked upon  
Commands a blurred and subjugate response,  
And though you be the merriest soul, anon  
Will have you. Rise, and baffle it at once;  
From clockwheel, graph and gauge run gloriously astray.

That is not error, is not dreaming guess  
When from the star unheavened the tragic light  
Glares blue and makes the stone road bodiless  
While the dumb farms lie drunken with midnight.  
Where the wan woman in her dusky shawl  
Flits past the stumbling horse and is but air,  
There is the subtilty that bloods us all;  
And long if on your white-armed love you stare  
She's floatingly transfigured to this shepherdess.



In music playing let your life recline  
And marvel not when at some gracious pause  
Bright answer wake<sup>l</sup>, and feels itself divine,  
Yours is to chime response, not track the cause.  
For there are gleams of sun and gleams of God,  
And bells in heaven, and campanology—  
Heár, and be sphered above; nor pry nor prod;  
The sweet wind swelling through the choral tree,  
The voice that ends a dream have borne a charm too fine.

When June's white-throated warm convolvulus  
From the green hedge seems wisdom watching you,  
Gaze, gaze and gaze; here's chance harmonious;  
The old stone sunning by is watching too.  
Fear nothing, so you have not strumpeted  
The pride and essence which is yours and theirs;  
They have their moments when they droop the head,  
And when they feel the God whose beams and airs  
Come angelizing all that grin not "Is it thus?"

### *An Ancient Path*

Rosy belief uplifts her spires  
Anemone-frail in amaranth air  
That never hurts a thing:  
This river's highway leads us there,  
Hear how each crystal crisped spring  
Comes lightfoot down from shepherd shires,  
Comes past the stones and roots and briars  
To journey with this king.  
And Honesty on his boat with bales  
And bags and barrels laded sails;  
The merry wind knows that white wing!  
He sees those steeples, and he hails;  
And we'll go journeying there.

You must be by me, then be gone,  
Then through the bush peep like a bird,  
And then with arm in mine step on,  
And like one in a legend sing,  
Or play with an angel word.  
The silver bream jumps out of the stream,  
Morn's diamonds ding from the blackbird's wing,  
And through long glades that gilt wing speeds—  
We'll go where this green river leads  
And prisms light and bowing reeds  
To that sweet town,  
With lilies lulled, to that sweet town  
Whose airiest tiptoe chanticleer  
Gleams on the west wind all the year;  
Belief's our mark, we've crossed the down,  
Time brought the eagle—now the dove!  
And there's her sparkling belvedere—  
Come, my late and early love.

### *Voices by a River*

“WHAT hearest thou?  
That swelling sigh and slow-rebellious moan  
Is the weir water talking all alone,  
The water, as at dusk through centuries flown,  
More audible now.

“Once more thou seest  
The sun far off surrendering his tired head  
Into the seas of sleep? his royal red  
Shall soon salute the shepherds, comfort spread  
Through a clear east.

“Thou feelest—nothing  
But airs dark-fluttering from the bulrush-grove,  
Moth-like; and may not evening zephyrs rove?  
Or mist-veil brushed thee, fine as yet was wove  
For moonmaid's clothing.”

“Turn thy dear brow  
Full towards me, with thy young strong arm infold,  
For I am trapped, on a sudden made centuries old;  
Warm me a little, the mist clings deadly cold  
That veils me now.”

### *A Superstition Revisited*

WHILE on the lavender by the door  
The rime was gathering chill,  
And darkness with a sigh or two  
Heard daylight near the hill,

And while the candle drunkenly  
Sank, top and tallow aflame,  
Flickering bronze on the half-dropt jaw  
Of the woman crouching there,

The baby dying in her arms  
Seemed yawning for some breath,  
And, as he looked in painful wish,  
He saw not mother but Death.

This Death at first was hollow-eyed,  
Deep shadows masked the face  
As through the room the crazy light  
Tossed blackness and grimace.

But thence with modulation kind  
As a honeyed shower steals on  
He glistened to that tiny soul,  
He smiled and his blue eyes shone.

“Thou art the one,” the free soul sang,  
“That camest here with me  
No long time since; I’d take thy hand  
And go back home with thee.”

Soft and soft they crossed the threshold,  
Swiftly had they flown,  
But through a garret window sounded  
A dreaming, wavering moan;  
“Loose, loose my hand,” the winged soul prayed,  
“I have here a thing to say.”  
A moment, and as mild as moonlight  
Hand in hand, away!  
The grandmother dream-awakened saw  
Jill’s baby in the bed:  
Cold hands, my pretty! ah, that dear child!  
She knew, the child was dead.  
Upon her dreadless eye the form  
Faded, and in the thatch  
The sparrows roused to the touch of day;  
She went down, lifted the latch  
Where Jill, her swart hair torn, was clutching  
Creation turned to clay,  
And the vain milk to her bare bosom  
Still was finding way.  
“They always come,” the old head thought  
“To tell us when they’re free,”  
And with dry eyes, uncouthly wise,  
She clasped her daughter, whose surmise  
Defied eternity.

### *Nature Displayed*

I LOVED her in my innocent contemplation,  
I felt before the need her consolation;  
Where green-enshrined the spring-well tinkled down  
I drank sweet music; the soft shadow brown  
Of hazelled purlieus by deer-pastures made

My fancy's ambush. Down in the lawny glade  
(Hope more than guessed) white sylvandom was dancing,  
The wind-waved bough betrayed the wild sylph glancing.

Then pleased I thought, this country, mother of grace,  
Was in her sons most fortunate. Every place  
Half-shadowed, half-disclosed such consonant cares,  
One would not haggle which were hers, which theirs:  
The church was brother to the chestnut-trees,  
The mossed bridge clasped his singing bride, gay Teise!  
From every wall some golden blossom sprang,  
Bells, tree-tops, rain and wind in one peal rang.

Thrilled and translucent with this ripe concent  
I honoured her, but infant truth was pent  
In wordless shell, the image of a bird  
Waiting the sun-shaft and the magic word.  
And on a day it chanced I found, beside  
A window where the bee in the tea-rose plied,  
Old verse-men; honour's wise unjealous Muse  
Woke me at last—now not an hour to lose!  
These sang my song, fresh as the garden air  
That fluttered the dear pages, then and there;  
From *Grongar Hill* the thrush and flute awoke,  
And Green's mild sibyl\* chanted from her oak,  
Along the vale sang Collins' hamlet bell,  
And Chatterton's ribibles† din'd in the dell;  
While changing *Seasons* hymned one changless Form,  
And the rainbow worshipped with the thunderstorm.

O Nature, maker, mother! what deep joy  
Thus made a wild harp of a sauntering boy!  
O honour, how enthroned by Nature's men!  
I hailed, and listening loved and loved again.

Alludes to the ever-charming interpretation of English country atmosphere in Matthew Green's "The Spleen".

†Quoted from the Rowley Poems, Eclogue the First. Were Chatterton's dramatic and heroic heights absent, his country muse would still astonish with animated, mellow and spacious scenery. His "ribibles" are a sort of cousin to Milton's "jocund rebecks," which ought not to have been omitted in these lines of gratitude for early poetic delights.

## *A Morning Piece*

### *Written in Absence*

Lucky and pretty Light! smiling on me  
All this blue rustling morning, may your grace,  
Call up my joy in every place  
Which by your rays I see:  
My joy! A starveling prayer and cold;  
There shall be joy a millionfold.

Let your child-gleam visit each twinkling steep  
Where still a Corydon loves his fine sheep,  
Or, still, true labourer, grumbling  
As he goes, rattling and rumbling,  
The white mill shows the valley how to work,  
Hurling his great arms round; but far away  
The water-mill, as staunch a patriarch,  
Has plunged afresh into the early day.  
The bold stream thunders through the weir  
And music fills the angler's ear.

Some last soft misty swathes, dear Hour, dispel  
From lawns that lie beside a sleepier stream,  
Till all the fragrant scheme  
Of peaceful men who know their flowers as well  
As bees do burns rich for the conquering bees.  
Then over lattices  
Of seagreen glass, and gables full of nests,  
The proud eye rests  
On the arrowy spire, now like a soaring flame,  
As though, God's word being Light, it answered with  
the same.

My dream, I'll catch you yet; my Light,  
Illude no more; light speaks with sight,  
And dream Light surely alone discloses  
Beside these spires and rills and roses

Melodies as if they grew  
Clear as poplars on the view!  
Dream? I am *here* and I am *now*,  
But *there* and *then* bedew my brow;  
The twofold air is jewelled with the singing  
Of far-off youth, old Whitsun bells are ringing;  
This sunbeam's pearl, this trilling breeze contrive  
To give me back those distant dead alive!

## *The Age of Herbert & Vaughan*

THEN it was faith and fairness,  
White sun and western wind,  
When every moment spoke  
The Holy to the mind,  
And quickened saints' awareness.

In close and pregnant symbol  
Each primrosed morning showed  
The triune God's patrol  
On every country road,  
In bushy den and dimble.

And where young Prue was sweeping,  
Or giggling at the gate,  
Or Tom was scaring crows  
Or the dog Sam licked the plate  
Or ewe and lamb were sleeping,

The witness still recorded  
Glance, phrase or incident  
That appertained to Christ  
And by these shows was meant  
At once he stood rewarded!

## *The Wartons*

### *And Other Early Romantic Landscape-Poets*

MILD hearts! and modest as the evening bell  
That rings so often through your meadow rhyme,  
May there be elms and belfries where you dwell,  
And the last streaks of day still gild old time!

In the new heaven and true Jerusalem  
Can such things be? That can they! where you rove  
The glow-worm shall not hide his elvish gem,  
The owl with ghostly wing shall tour the grove.

And when the charms and fairies of the night  
Are changed to sparkling dew and morning's choir,  
Gazing the vale farms, from some sheep-strown height,  
How will you welcome Phœbus' dancing fire!

On ancient arches shall your primrose peep,  
On diamond lattices your sunbeam play,  
Across shy brooks your little peasants leap,  
And peace and innocence divide the day.

Nor shall the shades of poets not be seen  
Whom you have loved. Milton in his young prime,  
Spenser and Chaucer on the daisied green  
Shall join with you and hear May-morning chime.

## *The Complaint*

THE village spoke: "You come again,  
You left me for a world of men.  
Tell,  
How you feel now my former spell?"



And I: "Sweet simpleton, old home—  
Much charged, with puzzled heart I come;  
Still,  
I think you are the nonpareil."

At that a breeze, a sigh was heard,  
And thus the traveller caught the word,  
"Child,  
Love's just and gentle; love you smiled;

But was it not my creed and dream  
To fit you for a mightier theme?  
Proud  
You stepped away to join the crowd.

And since, what hills, what skies you've known,  
What streets of strength, what speaking stone!  
More,  
The drama of terrestrial war;

And love the Atlantis, far and near,  
And genius brightening sphere on sphere,  
Bounds  
That only seemed thought's pleasure-grounds.

Thence come you with this accent dim,  
With eyes that gaze till the tears brim?  
I  
But look, how small and poor I lie."

The sunny grass danced on the wall,  
The smithy clanged, old Jesse Hall  
Flung  
His jacket off, and scythed and sung;

From school the hungry youngsters rushed,  
The caravan passed, the mill sluice gushed.  
"Dear,"  
I answered, "all my ways led here."

## *The Eccentric*

HIS sleeping or his waking mind  
A master might control,  
But with what ordinance would he bind  
The wilful-wandering soul?

When all is lamp-lit peace and bloom,  
Its pale dismay appears  
Walking the wars and flaming gloom  
Of charred and riddled years.

Amid the mind's mechanic tense  
Of every day's account,  
The soul allays the pilgrim sense  
At some Arcadian fount.

In hate's salt sea its Naiad wave  
Upbubbles; in the din  
Of comic wildfire it stares grave;  
It mocks our discipline,

This corposant, this light indeed  
That with its sudden smiles  
Makes laughing child or leafing weed  
Clear at ten thousand miles!

## *The Charm*

THE voice of innocence I heard  
Answering some young frightened bird,  
Or perhaps it talked alone  
Of the rainbow sign then shown.

Then I heard it at the green,  
Where they filled their buckets clean,  
Where the lame child shouted past  
In hare-and-hounds, not least though last.

Innocence, your voice! again  
Where a dozen labouring men  
Brought their royallest flowers and fruit  
To church, I heard—an angel's flute.

Thus this heaven-prevailing charm  
Came my way by lane and farm  
Till it seemed a common thing:  
Then the unseen bliss took wing.

But some day this joy again  
Will come and with such fullness then  
That even in smothered holes of homes  
Where dusty sunlight scarcely comes,

In ugly brawl or leering lust,  
In hopes long left to hopeless rust,  
In Meshech mills or Kedar's tents  
I'll hear the voice of innocence.

## *Ruin*

BESIDE the lonely tower I gaze for thee,  
O clear-blue-eyed Tranquillity;  
The tower's green tassels wave and beckon me,  
And that way hurries the contented bee.  
Yet when I come,  
To stand in shadow of old martyrdom,  
Where stairs uptwisting shatter in the air,  
And conscience views blood-streaks and matted hair,  
The stone skull-eyes look down most drearily,  
And poisonous mood floats from the elder-tree  
Where unseen serpents wind.  
The eyes look down  
Where snouts of tree-anatomies toad-brown  
Pierce the green-scurfed pond, and waters lurch  
To the submerged fury and fiery-tortured search  
Of knife-like shapes, that only famine find.

## *The Resignation*

LIVE in that land, fair spirit and my friend,  
Which you are wealthy in, where your estate  
Ripples in wheat and sunshine without end,  
And wood-rides never reach the glittering gate,  
    Where fall the nymphal rills  
    Down sunny hills;  
    And shepherds there sit playing  
    "Corinna's gone a-Maying"—  
O ever may your rills like lovesongs run,  
And each green height allure some shining One.

With that, your cities twinkle through warm miles  
Of pastoral blue, and you at one thought move  
Where blest bells chant and antique order smiles,  
And love peeps down from airy nooks, your love.  
    Her flowery lattice soon  
    Beneath the moon  
    May lodge the owl tu-whoing,  
    For she'll have stolen a-wooing,  
And where through dragon throats the spring leaps clear  
Be whispering lest a wide-eyed rose should hear.

This was my country, and it may be yet,  
But something flew between me and the sun;  
The gnawed reeds blacken, the thinned poplars fret,  
Leaves loll, would wake, and with a thrill are gone.  
    The city faces stare  
    Across the square  
    Where the burnt spire of vision  
    Hangs in hurt indecision;  
They guess strange menace where old safety throve,  
That palest face among them was my love.

## *Would you return?*

POPPIES never brighter shone, and never sweeter smelled the hay,  
The town with its steeples looked made of silver all the way,  
Down in the streamy valley like a treasure that town lay.

Who was not with me there? who in that crystal air  
Hastened not beside me on the springy grass, did not stare  
Miles ahead where those bright tops of mansioned hope were gems  
    afire?

Come then, know again this same knoll we paused upon,  
These poplars with their flashing wind, this singing rill, this silent  
    stone—  
The sun pale peering at the shag-haired storm that swooped on  
    Avalon!

## *Village Lights*

THESE dim-lamped cabins leaning upon the gulf of oceanic night  
Whose gorge is hoarse with storm, whose surge with a scornful  
    whistling washes over,  
Would seem the craziest cockle-shells, if the meteor gave us a  
    moment's sight,  
And still unhaunted on this phantasmal abyss with life and love  
    they hover.

How now, bold mariners? what fixed star  
So certifies you where you are?  
From what magnetic surety grows  
This unimaginable repose?  
Who with his sea-hat over his eyes  
Defends your keels from the fanged surprise,  
And while your banjos and feet are playing  
Knows each secret the deeps are saying?  
Kiss then, strum then, heap the coals,  
With flowery cordials brim the bowls—

Since none could ever command this dark  
Who stared his eyes out like a shark:  
This we in the whirls, shrill goblins, know,  
Awash in fathomless dream's reflòw;  
We mapped, logged, watched, thumbèd all the rules,  
Ten times as wise, ten thousand fools.

## *A Favourite Scene*

*Recalled on looking at Birket Foster's Landscape*

HAUNTEST thou so my waking and my sleeping,  
Darling of solitude, Arcadian grace,  
Round these long stony ruins of absence peeping,  
My Naiad; even more, my nymphal race  
Budded at once, all, all congenering,  
And at one glad look new-rendering  
Whatever joy in tree is dreaming, in meadow sauntering, in  
freshet leaping?

As in the dance, when this one makes advance,  
The other too with answering gesture moves,  
I as I hear thee singing would singing near thee  
And mate and imitate those spells that endear thee—  
Which old Time bowering in thy dell approves,  
And spares to do thee wrong,  
Himself slow murmuring round, as though newfound,  
Thy fountain-song.  
Thy spirit self, perfume and dew and breeze  
Of unknown birth but lovely, hovers now  
Before my sense, that copies as it sees,  
And like thee strives to glide and float and bow;  
To such a dædal dancer

Would make a faultless answer—  
But where's the fresh enchantment? the serene  
Undulant omnipresence of the queen?  
Dear stranger, rarer than Sabrina, stay,  
And kindly lead the shepherd's holiday;  
And from thy simple adornings make May-mornings,  
For one who stumbles through a thorny way.  
Thou ne'er yet hast deserted him,  
Who, though his eyes with weeping swim,  
Would marvel on thy waters' brim,  
And still has misty-bright esteems  
Of all thy trances shy and sacred, thy pure streams.

Lament it not as though October gloom  
With thunder's glare malign and brutal boom  
Struck thy bombarded beauty, when his swarthy  
And clownish measures all unworthy  
Strive in thy own delight to dance before thee!  
There, he cries, the willow dips  
Her rainy hair in the falling fount,  
And there the silvery songbird sips  
And steps on stones whose gems I'll count;  
The frolic wind that ranged too long  
The hot hay-field, he sips to-day,  
And runs again renewed and strong  
To kiss the lasses in the hay;  
The ripple silvers rings on rings  
Where one small water-darling springs,  
And He that knew how lilies grew  
And without beauty's frown outshone  
The panoplies of Solomon,  
O had He seen this retinue  
Of rosy-petalled sauntering joys  
That in the water swirl or poise—  
Most him who with his blue-zoned mail  
Follows the idle kings that sail  
In worlds scarce deeper than the glass  
Where boding beauty sighs Alas!

## *For there is no Help in Them*

SHE lies on that white breast she loves, and well  
Studies that mother-face, which is so wise:  
Whose rose and primrose heaven unchangeable  
Coys on her smile, spring-sunlight-sweet. She lies  
Awake, alone, wrapt all in wool, and cold  
And burning; light glares down, a roseless—Hark!  
Who comes? she fights to gaze, and half has rolled  
Her hurt head round, when there is nought but dark.

She lies in state; the old green looking-glass  
Reflects the baby-carriage, where half-hid  
A white box holds the joy that is as grass;  
A dull plant droops its dusk. One lifts the lid,  
Meets the small pearl face, the dark peering eyes,  
So disenchanted and so sadly wise.

## *An Annotation*

*The primrose way to the everlasting bonfire.*

MACBETH II, iii.

*Like a puffed and reckless libertine  
Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads.*

HAMLET I, iii.

EMBLEM of early seeking, early finding,  
Frailness whose patience stills the moody cries  
Of old Time struggling through chaotic skies  
Where the lashed sleet-gust foams, buffeting and blinding,  
And then were ever the light in his calm eyes  
May after May, a star so dear and mild  
That love by the evening bell and you beguiled  
Thinks echo charmed to your still bell replies;



Pilgrim, to whom the weaker sort will turn  
Their pale looks, and your pale resolve responds,  
Your paths are peace, they comfort and not burn,  
There young Love ströls, old Adage stares in ponds.  
With what strange wrong was Shakespeare mocked when he  
So tossed you to the hooves of infamy?

## *Trust*

TRUST is a trembling thing;  
No glaring champion never overthrown,  
No cannon grinning out of catacombed stone,  
But a young sparrow that with just-tried wing  
On some steep wall-face fluttering goes to cling;  
Or a petticoated child not two years old,  
Who with a simple-simulated wrath  
Bids some great dog begone out of his path,  
Betwixt abashed and bold.

My pretty fledgeling, flit and light unlamed;  
Can Nature else but love you? Shrilly berate  
That slow old dog, young darling; it was foretold  
You should not be ashamed  
So speaking with your enemies in the gate.

## *Night-wind*

ALONG the lifted line of sombre green  
The sunset bonfire calms in golden space,  
The one hedge oak against the splendour seen  
Like a squat idol grossly stares at grace.  
The white star's come, no witness saw it come,  
The music is the night in reed and thorn;  
The young bird doubts and stirs, then nestles home,  
That winged dew rustles on.

O Vesper-born,  
Stiff-necked I stand like that hewn knotty tree,  
As if heaven were my halo! Your dim span  
Seemed scarce from fern to wildbriar; but began  
And died? Your moment was infinity.  
I bowed not, trembled not; as though I were  
The carven botch of an idolater.

## *Ornithopolis*

*Suggested by an Excellent Article, "Starlings in London," by Mr.  
Eric Parker, "Spectator," March 6th, 1926.*

Not your least glory, many-gloried Wren,  
Springs from these birds, that to your immense Dome  
When eve grows glassy cold and clear, come home  
From fallow and blue fen;  
Each flying to his mansion overhead,  
The guest of genius, sure of man at last,  
Though maelstrom roars and wild light volleys vast,  
Each calm and glad abed.

Never was covenant nor entente like this,  
Which still shall gather confidence and joy;  
Man's city chosen the birds' metropolis,  
Whole myriads taken with a fair decoy!  
Through tree and chimney-top the news is told,  
With loud-tongued gossip of an age of gold.

## *Cloud-life*

Look with what Titan majesty arise  
Those sunset shapes, and indolently swift  
Pursue a mighty journey through the skies;  
How like embodying thoughts they sway and lift

And intervolve awhile, dislimn and cleave,  
Rivals and friends! each kin, and each alone.  
They give their genius and again receive,  
One glory of rich union marches on.

So calmly flows the ocean air, so clear  
The sight has grown, that those bright vapours gleam  
Like souls, their rosy bodies move in a dream  
And wish intelligent; they draw most near,  
About to speak, to music their god-sense,  
Their single songs, and full-quiured eloquence.

### *The Unquiet Eye*

SECRET and soft as a summer cloud that blooms  
From hid Hesperides into our skies,  
And smiling comes abroad, but no man's eyes  
Will watch it till it troops with common glooms,  
A fancy, look, floats lustrous into view,  
With Eden's god-life on its radiant brow;  
Its proud advance proclaims, "The world is new";  
The mind half sees; looks thence, again looks—Now?

But by these deaths, these profanations schooled—  
For Beauty is no jealous god, but still  
Regards us as less wicked than befooled—  
One May-day when the young myth tops the hill  
There pure and patient shall my gaze ascend  
To win my heart a glory without end.

### *On the Portrait of a Colonel*

G. H. H.

WHEN now at this stern depth and shade of soul  
I lift my eyes to that most honoured face,  
And yearn towards that harmony and whole  
Of soldier creed and act and pride of place,  
The eye's shrewd humour, the lip's generous grace,

The stirring zest, the power to make and give,  
I feel my youth awake afresh and live,  
And bugled morning glows and climbs apace.

Some stubborn clouds of conscience stain that prime,  
And chilly creeps the muttering breeze, regret;  
But still this picture kindles coming time,  
And bids me gird myself for crossroads yet  
Where through the inhuman tempestings of night  
This man's commanding trust will be my sight.

### *The Chance*

MIND and soul a halting brook,  
Famished with long burning days,  
Meshed with many a bramble-hook  
Where befouled the foam-fleece stays;

Nor must many days go by  
Till but one or two dark holes  
Cupping their gross liquor lie,  
Where hot eyes lamp in dizzy shoals.

But hark! through time what impulse roars?  
What fire and ice prepare to fall?  
Come, though your torrents burst my shores  
To naked havoc, hurl them all!

### *Release*

POUR forth, shrill sparkling brook, your deathless wave,  
Your pretty counterplay of dark and clear;  
Though small your path, no starrier fancies pave  
Earth's proudest deep, nor sunnier nymphs appear.  
No voice of glory waits you at the weir,

Yet there are eyes to shine with your young force,  
And that swift swirl and leap will take the ear  
Of some with wonder; though Zambesi hoarse  
Burst on them lost in life, you are their watercourse.

This bird who haunts your channels, without change  
Might jewel heaven's still waters with blue wing,  
Nor should the resting shepherd think it strange  
If he saw there your pearl-clad dace upspring,  
Or heard these brook-like aspen-branches sing  
To airs embalmed with daffodils for grace  
To music on; then fear not, trembling thing,  
Earthly comparisons; we bless your face,  
And find you, luck divine! rippling through time and space.

### *Entanglement*

THAT shower-silvery grass where the damson-flower drifted  
And the small frog leapt clear as I came,  
That songburst when out of the thunder-cloud lifted  
The sun sent his pæan of flame,  
Those rustlings of wrens in the ivy—dear God,  
I saw every leaf of the lane I then trod!

But now the grey age passes by my faint senses  
And charm lies wing-shattered or dead;  
No orchard-bough blossoms above these steel fences;  
The clay-coloured clouds overhead  
Neither speak in proud thunder, nor let the sun smile  
On the dust-track unsigned mile after mile.

### *The Escape*

IN the stubble blossoms  
A pansy small,  
Which I will get and set again  
Beneath my house wall.

I took the tiny outlaw  
I gave it sheltered ground;  
In the stubble blooms a pansy now,  
But here no sign is found.

*To a Spirit*

THE young spring night in all her virtue walks;  
I never knew myself so fallen in love.  
And she is kind; her eyes reveal it, where  
Soft blue she gazes through the windowed woods.  
Her touch is seraph sense; within it glide  
Primrosy coolness, bluebell-trembling shyness,  
Violet-benediction; if she speaks,  
It is a sigh unbosomed with such music  
That far and wide the forests and the farms  
Whisper, Arouse; 'tis God.

Poor cheating Folly, should I wait on you?

### *The Match*

In a round cavern of glass, in steely water  
(None yet so comfortless appalled the day)  
A man-eel poised, his lacquer-skin disparted  
In desert reds and wharfy green; his eyes too  
Burned like beads of venom.  
Beyond the glass the torturer stood, with thrustings,  
Passes, grimaces, toothy grins, warped oeillades.  
To this black magic mania's eel retorted  
With fierce yet futile muzzle, and lancing darted  
In an electric rapine, against the wall  
Of glass, or life: those disputants of nothing  
So acidly attracting, lovingly loathing,  
Driven by cold radii, goblin lovers, seemed yet  
The difficult dumb-show of my generation.

## *The Storm*

SKY beyond words! Elysian-field  
In sunset air and blush revealed:  
To eyes of earth is it so given  
To peep at what they dream in heaven?  
What angel dropped her rainbow-flowers  
In that horizon blue of ours?  
And that young moon, whence came she now  
But from some calm triunion's brow?

Sky beyond words! and could it pass  
That we should lose the magic glass,  
And strain to see through our harsh shroud  
Anarchies of whirling, smouldering cloud,  
Labouring with engines of black force  
To hurl sweet Nature from her course?  
To lean fanged lightnings can it be  
Our hopes ran out for sympathy?

## *The Immolation*

It is but open the door of this walled den,  
And there wait gleaming majesty and God;  
Only to cease this mechanism of men,  
And take one step, one glance upon the road.  
Uncottage then, desire, arise, dark love,  
And in an instant sparkle to those signs;  
There burn the eyes of Constancy above,  
On that most ancient brow care leaves no lines.

This we have heard, and still might gladly prove,  
But in life's anagram of mood engrossed,  
Still tracing silhouettes of hate and love,  
And grudging consummations planned but lost,  
Our souls have fouled the key to that great sight:  
Enough for us to lantern our own night.

## *Chinese Picture*

ASCEND this path, whose stairway windings gleam  
With ghosts of light through pine and cedar; rise,  
My thought, and gain each mountainous surprise,  
Each gulf of breath-like stone where the one stream  
Darts down its silver lightning; drink each turn  
Of curve and colour, implanted bliss or terror,  
Bow to the gods low-housing in the fern  
And at death's fox-holes they will outwit error;  
O rise among these fangy roots, these rocks  
In sledgy ruin ever edging—strike  
Your foot like faith where armed dragon-shocks  
Have wrenched the burnt ridge into spur and spike;  
Question no sign; the hermit of the height,  
Once you command his secret, will not grudge your right.

## *The Secret*

THE starbeam lights, a touch, a breath,  
On a rover in midnight mood,  
In rapture with his houseless heath,  
Warm furze-perfume, stern mountain-wreath  
Of pines, and a water-music beneath,  
And shades that lived before Stonehenge stood.

That far-spent patient messenger still  
Woos him with sigh-soft hand,  
Appeals through endlessness until  
Response awakes with as deep a thrill  
As when dawn's gale of splendour shrill  
Storms with young force the general land.



## *Familiarity*

DANCE not your spectral dance at me;  
I know you well!  
Along this lane there lives no tree  
But I can tell.  
I know each fall and rise and twist;  
You—why, a wildflower in the mist,  
The moon, the mist.

Sound not that long alarm, gray tower,  
I know you well;  
This is your habit at this hour,  
You and your bell!  
If once, I heard a hundred times  
Through evening's ambuscade your chimes—  
Dark tower, your chimes.

Enforce not that no-meaning so,  
Familiar stream;  
Whether you tune it high or low,  
I know your theme;  
A proud-fed but a puny rill,  
A meadow brook, poured quick and shrill—  
Alone and shrill.

Sprawl not so monster-like, blind mist;  
I know not "seems";  
I am too old a realist  
To take sea-dreams  
From you, or think a great white Whale  
Floats through our hawthorn-scented vale—  
This foam-cold vale.

## *Dream Encounters*

THE measureless houses of dreams,  
And the magic of hours within hours;  
And those who pass by like clear streams,  
Pass by us, on a journey not ours!  
The eyes that we know and we fear,  
As waters of Castaly clear,  
That gaze that should once have been sweet,  
Now a terror to meet!  
—Yet, both in one corridor narrowly led,  
Those steps in another intensity tread;  
There is space that convenes us, but holds us apart;  
Sunlight and sunlight, distinctly combined,  
As a wish with the wind  
And all heaven with one heart.

## *Parable*

WIDE as the world is, music abounds;  
Time has a legion of lovely sounds  
From the soonest blackbird to latest bee  
That murmurs along his honeying rounds;  
    Surpassing those, one anthem is sweet  
    As ever the message of Paracletè,  
    When the kiss of Spring  
    Says all must sing  
    And the host of secrets are bright on the wing.  
Then the willow, that last in the moon stood numb,  
Finds its Apollo-vesture come,  
And, waiting on zephyr-sense so long,  
Communes its sudden vein of song  
Till on to the white and blue serene  
One willow sings from a hamlet green.

Long are the sighs that lull the sleep  
Of breathing youngness in such new hours.  
Breezes are come to dance the flowers

But from what deep,  
What siren shores!  
Such nights, the moon's still self can stir  
The feathery spray of this one tree,  
And allure the least to tune with her—  
She sways these leaves that sways the sea.  
And far I hear the answer given;  
Responding triumph will not pause,  
Dares trespass the ethereal laws.  
The ploughman's mark, the hatchet's toy,  
Magicked into a winged Joy,  
Reveals new song to Heaven.

### *A Sunrise in March*

WHILE on my cheek the sour and savage wind  
Confuses soul with sense, while unamazed  
I view the siege of pale-starred horror raised  
By dawn whose waves charge stern and crimson-lined,  
In cold blue tufts of battle-smoke afar,  
And sable crouching thickets by my way—  
While I thus droop, the living land grows gay  
With starry welcomes to the conquering star!

From every look-out whence they watch him win  
(That angry Cromwell!) high on thorn and bine  
The selfless wildbirds hail their holy light:  
With changes free as flute or violin,  
To naked fields they peal as proud and fine  
As though they had not dreamed of death all night.

### *Fragment*

STEAL abroad, your time is come; doubt not once the new-blown  
hour;  
Winter's wickedness is past,  
And those long leaden nerveless moods

Which frowned much worse than frozen woods  
 Gone, as soft as thistle-wool  
 Upon a zephyr's love-like breath;  
 In animation beautiful  
 Returns your chance; now wander with  
 The sparkle on the living seas,  
 Nor fear that in these green estates  
     Ambushed may lie  
 The hooded serpent with the human eye;  
 But all is opening garden-gates,  
 Running mill-sails, fountain trees,  
 Winged boats that water-jewels attend  
 Where singingly they round the bend;  
 And sounding works whose smoke lifts proud  
 Through towers of force to yon rose-cloud  
 From elemental engines poured—  
 And both a glory to the Lord.  
 From mill to steeple, day breaks pure;  
 Your horse is on the road he wished,  
 And away past suburb and colure  
 Goes like the famous giant refreshed;  
 While you as light you travel by  
 See beckoning hand or smiling eye  
 That came in night's dark fairy showers  
 To make new morning wild with flowers

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### *Summer Rainstorm*

SWEET conversations, woodland incantations  
 Are thrilling through the tides of gale and shower,  
     Which now conceal,  
     Now blue-reveal,  
 Across the fallow's russet undulations  
 A broken windmill and a silent tower.

And sometimes glancing through the top sprigs dancing  
Elf-wings set out on visit and patrol.

Though the full cloud  
Frowns monster-browed,  
Those merry wild-folk chirruping and chancing  
Know the kind truth; would I had such a soul!

Joy's masque and fashion of Time's Samson-passion  
Deceives no lark that springs from weed and clod.

Through their frank sight  
I feel the bright  
Angel-eveat of sunset's fresh creation  
And fields made lovely with the living God.

### *The Kiln*

BESIDE the creek where seldom oar or sail  
Adventures, and the gulls whistling like men  
Patrol the pasture of the falling tide,  
Like Timon's mansion stands the silent kiln.  
Half citadel, half temple, strong it stands  
With layered stones built into cavernous curves,  
The fire-vault now as cool as leaves and stones  
And dew can be. Here came my flitting thought,  
The only visitor of a sunny day,  
Except the half-mad wasp that fights with all,  
The leaping cricket in his apple-green,  
And emerald beetle with his golden helmet;  
While the south wind woke all the colony  
Of sorrels and sparse daisies, berried ivies  
And thorns bowed down with sloes, and brambles red  
Offering a feast that no child came to take.

In these unwanted derelicts of man  
Nature has touched the picture with a smile  
Of more than usual mystery; the far heights  
With thunderous forest marshalled are her toil,

But this her toy, her petty larceny  
That pleased her, lurking like a gipsy girl.  
My thought came here with artfulness like hers  
To spy on her, and, though she fled, pursued  
To where on eastern islands, in the cells  
Of once grave seers, her iris woos the wind.

### *The Correlation*

AGAIN that yellow dusk or light along  
The winter hills: again the trees' black claws  
Waiting and working by the bridge of space:  
Again the tower, among tombs a huge tomb;  
White scattered birds, a black horse in the meads,  
And the eel-track of the brown stream fringing by.

Would understanding win herself my vote,  
Now, having known this crisis thirty years,  
She should decide me why it overwhelms  
My chart of time and history; should declare  
What in the spirit of a man long schooled  
To human concept and devotion dear,  
Upraised by sure example, undefiled  
By misery and defeat, still in the sun—  
What stirs in him, and finds its brother-self,  
From that late sky. Again that sky, that tower  
These effigies and wizardries of chance,  
Those soundless volleys of pale and distant birds  
Have taken him, and from his whirring toils  
Made him as far away, as unconcerned,  
As consonant with the Power as its bare trees.

### *Autumn in the Weald*

COME, for here the lazy night  
With rosy camp-fires blossoms bright,  
The stream half-runs with flute-like trill  
Through the quaint channels of the mill

And, to accentuate the hush,  
Through fine bamboo and needled rush  
A water-spirit ferries. Come,  
And see how kindly all's at home.  
No sweeter things than these I rhyme,  
And this by much their sweetest time.  
Then, sweet, agree, and by this gate  
Watch each one gathering to his mate,  
To nest or warren, bough or byre—  
The dearness answers all desire,  
When all, the shepherd, dog and sheep  
With sleep-like motions welcome sleep;  
The elm-tree's momentary stir  
And freshened sluices yield to her,  
And though the fire-side shout and song  
Defy her there, they will not long.

The bonfire's crackling zeal dies down,  
The laughing supper-groups are gone,  
The fair falls quiet in Yalding town,  
Alone with the mist I linger on.

## *Return*

DEED and event of prouder stature  
Dare not always overshadow  
The first fresh buddings of our nature;  
Their hidden colour does not fade.

We well may quit our laboured action  
At some sweet call to early loves,  
And find the jewel of self-contraction  
Like saints in rocks and springs and groves.

Win back the world when true Aurora  
Dawned a goddess, not an hour!  
Think, have you caught the smile of Flora  
Since your own life was a young flower?

And Love, even Love, has dropped her lilies  
On the hot highroad; once she knew  
How columbines and daffadillies  
Created her own sun and dew.

Return; how stands that man enchanted  
Who, after seas and mountains crossed,  
Finds his old threshold, so long scanted,  
With not a rose or robin lost!

The wise, from passion now retreating  
To the hamlets of the mind,  
In every glance have claimed the greeting  
Of spirits infinitely kind.

### *The Deeper Friendship*

WERE all eyes changed, were even poetry cold,  
Were those long systems of hope that I tried to deploy  
Skeletons, still I should keep one final hold,  
Since clearer and clearer returns my first-found joy.

I would go, once more, through the sunless autumn in trouble;  
Thin and cold rain dripping down through branches black,  
Streams hoarse-hurrying and pools spreading over the stubble,  
And the waggoner leaving the hovel under his sack

Would guide me along by the gate and deserted siding,  
The inn with the tattered arbour, the choking weir;  
And yet, security there would need small guiding.  
I know one hearth, one love that shine beyond fear.

There, though the sharpest storm and flood were abroad,  
And the last husk and leaf were stripped from the tree,  
I would sue for peace where the rats and mice have gnawed,  
And well content that Nature should bury me.



## *The Blind lead the Blind*

DIM stars like snowflakes are fluttering in heaven,  
Down the cloud-mountains by wind-torrents riven;  
There are still chances, but one more than all  
Slowly burns out on the sea's dark wall—  
The best ever given.

One, the divinest, goes down to the dark,  
In a red sullen vanishing, a poor stifled spark.  
You, who have reason, were staring at this  
As though by your gaze it would clear the abyss—  
It was once your sea-mark.

Hear on the shore too the sighed monotones  
Of waves that in weakness slip past the purled stones;  
The seethe of blown sand round the dry fractured hull,  
Salt-reeds and tusked fence; hear the struck gull  
With death in his bones.

Slow comes the net in, that's filled with frustration;  
Night ends the day of thwart discreation;  
I would be your miracle-worker, sad friend,  
Bid a music for you and a new star ascend,—  
But I know isolation.

## *Report on Experience*

I HAVE been young, and now am not too old;  
And I have seen the righteous forsaken,  
His health, his honour and his quality taken.  
This is not what we were formerly told.

I have seen a green country, useful to the race,  
Knocked silly with guns and mines, its villages vanished,  
Even the last rat and last kestrel banished—  
God bless us all, this was peculiar grace.

I knew Seraphina; Nature gave her hue,  
Glance, sympathy, note, like one from Eden.  
I saw her smile warp, heard her lyric deaden;  
She turned to harlotry;—this I took to be new.

Say what you will, our God sees how they run.  
These disillusion are His curious proving  
That He loves humanity and will go on loving;  
Over there are faith, life, virtue in the sun.

### *On a Biographical Dictionary*

PROUD is assembly, and the anthem proud  
That populous nave and aisle and gallery raise  
In conscious strength, till God in his bright cloud  
Seems hovering to that multitude of praise.  
Yet from this mild prosaic book, as loud,  
As strong, as various, from as many throats,  
I hear the Gloria of a golden crowd,  
And there the heavenly wing still brighter floats.

I hear the trumpet and alarm of time  
Appeal, and men and women of great soul  
Replying, singing to their genius climb;  
Deep wisdoms hearten, organ-yearnings roll;  
Tried faith transfigures every imperfection  
Into one chant, one radiance and election.

### *A Quartet*

*("The Mikado" at Cambridge)*

FOUR singers with a Delphic seriousness  
In harmony's kind problem play their part,  
And I, who see and hear, think they express  
Nature's best gift, the calm delight of art.

Time fetched his halfpence out and bought a sheet.  
The twenty volumes slumber in a heap,  
The ballad among heirlooms lives enrolled.

Lordly oration thronged the sculptured roof,  
And pamphleteered in plaudits through the town;  
The charlatan proclaimed his draughts and pills;  
And tossed the crowd his woodcuts and his bills;  
From rhetoric's remains Time flies aloof,  
And hears the quack still pattering to the clown.

Voluptuous canvas! Venus in May-bloom,  
Sunshine of vital gold, faun-twinkling groves,  
Harmonious limbs and volant veils, go mourn;  
For you will lie with fire, while Time has borne  
The blue-daubed frigate from the servants' room  
To swell the mad collection of his loves.

### *Sir W. Treloar's Dinner for Crippled Children*

THIS is an ancient England in the new;  
Hear how those thousand children leap and sing.  
Their dreams, their wonder and their pleasure ring  
Through England; young expectancy comes true,  
While Mayor and Alderman and Usher bright  
With robes and jewels out of a fairy story,  
And brighter hearts, wish them their heart's delight,  
And music shows them sudden streets of glory.

Here walks the shade of Whittington in bliss;  
O greatness and good-nature, still you thrive.  
I thank my God, Charles Lamb is still alive  
In these new Londoners; they shall not miss  
The crown of life; here's Coram, Dickens, Hood,  
Christmas and Christ profoundly understood.

## *The Study*

WHILE I sit penning plans of dead affairs,  
And hardly pause but when some wilder gust  
Drives the mist shower with a more savage thrust  
Against my window, hark! what sweeter cares  
Find a shy voice, that makes my writing cease,  
And in this room of shelves, and books, and files,  
The ranked and crested past, what pleasure smiles!  
The dead withdraw, the living shares their peace.

For down my chimney with the dripping rain  
Come tiny trills and chirps and silvery notes  
Like whistling mice; it's nesting-time again;  
There in the dimness gape what eager throats  
Of the new brood, who through this tempest dun  
Know they are for the singing and the sun!

## *Values*

TILL darkness lays a hand on these gray eyes  
And out of man my ghost is sent alone,  
It is my chance to know that force and size  
Are nothing but by answered undertone.  
No beauty even of absolute perfection  
Dominates here—the glance, the pause, the guess  
Must be my amulets of resurrection;  
Raindrops may murder, lightnings may caress.

There I was tortured, but I cannot grieve;  
There crowned and palaced—visibles deceive.  
That storm of belfried cities in my mind  
Leaves me my vespers cool and eglantined.  
From love's wide-flowering mountain-side I chose  
This sprig of green, in which an angel shows.

## *Chances of Remembrance*

### I

“Turn not from me;  
I am the last rainbow that you may ever see.  
Take the rich surprise  
Of the skies  
With all your eyes;  
Dream from what labyrinths of bloom my wings arise.—  
See,  
Even a rainbow dies.”

### II

“You see me here,  
And you huddle past and shiver;  
One glance, you disappear,  
Leaving me, a dull brown thicket, beside a gray-gorged river.  
I beg no grace of yours;  
You have seen me, I go with you, in or out of doors;  
My thin blood will not wash out,  
My purple brambles will mantle you about,  
My thorny clasps pierce  
Into your verse.”

## *In Wiltshire*

*(Suggested by points of similarity with the Somme country.)*

FAIREST of valleys, in this full-bloomed night,  
Whose air so lulling,  
Whose dusk so understanding  
Embraces us, and gives us more than light,

O happy valley, with your poplars manned  
Beneath the visiting moon,  
And talking to the loitering moon,  
Vast as desire, and by an owl-call spanned,

Perfection is your name; yet (foolish prayer!)  
Well would it be for some,  
And safer your dim grace for some,  
If nothing in your presence could compare

With a far place. That shuttered lampless mill,  
Those white-glanced pools are like,  
These tangled cliffs are all too like  
A valley where our dream-selves tremble still.

The wires and poles that cut the ridge and sky,  
The blackness of these groves,  
The secret paths of river-groves,  
These fits and starts of sound, identify.

My feet, along this road, above that stream,  
Drop into marching-time,  
Make wild arithmetic of time—  
So like this valley and that dead one seem.

Resemble less, warm vale! that vale of tears;  
Some signs and shades forego.  
Cause not our very joy to go  
Among old valley-tombs of flesh and blood and years.

### *Seen in Twilight*

Too bold a light suits not all qualities;  
See, now that evening primroses the sky,  
The dark distinction of our roofs and trees  
Which we made nothing of when noon rode high.

These twigs are etched against that light they love  
Myriads, and each one wins its revelation;  
Obscure they were until the sun's remove,  
And now each makes its mark and intimation.

So with some spirits, who have long been known  
But vaguely in the lamping riot of life,  
Their curious beauty then was overshadowed;  
And now comes twilight, now their hieroglyph  
Emerges firm with individual grace,  
Responding calm and safe to that unstarling face.

## *The Survival*

TO-DAY's house makes to-morrow's road;  
I knew these heaps of stone  
When they were walls of grace and might,  
The country's honour, art's delight  
That over fountained silence showed  
Fame's final bastion.

Inheritance has found fresh work,  
Disunion union breeds;  
Beauty the strong, its difference lost,  
Has matter fit for flood and frost.  
Here's the true blood that will not shirk  
Life's new-commanding needs.

With curious costly zeal, O man,  
Raise orrery and ode;  
How shines your tower, the only one  
Of that especial site and stone!  
And even the dream's confusion can  
Sustain to-morrow's road.

## *My Window*

THE young moon, refreshed from her lynns of light,  
Moves there; her golden horn,  
New-beauty-born,  
Ravishes the night,  
And the single star that on human sight  
For ever companions her summer return,  
At this spell,  
Her lute, her blossom in the bosom, her bell,  
Is the eye of eternal affection,  
Tenderness, the nurse of resurrection;  
These at my window are, the moon and star,  
And this inquiring, retiring, reappearing bat  
With thwart magnificat.

Below, the pool of dewy meadows rests, its faint shine  
Far-stealing; and in my room, this mine  
And tunnel, prisoners stand on every hand,  
Their geniuses turned into printed pages,  
Princes these of all the ages;  
My love yet makes their shells and cerecloths bloom.  
I bless them, gazing along the wall at their questionable shape,  
And while I bless them, condemn them to no escape  
From me their king and ape  
Until my spirit be gone  
To hear them where the moon draws light affirm their new-seen  
"All is One."



*JAPANESE GARLAND*



## *The Visitor*

SUDDENLY the other side of this world wide,  
Whose proud extent even conquering Steam allowed,  
Grew near as the garden-gate; no mountain then,  
No rosy-torturing desert, no dead lake,  
Nor jungle, whirlpool, jealous frontier stopped us;  
We moved within the wings of some ten words  
Into a most familiar country air,  
And like spring showers received it from the hills  
That stood from our old hills ten thousand miles—  
Or none; we paused along the yellow plains,  
And kissed the child that ran from shy friends  
To take our hand; and we could tell what passed  
In unknown language between old pouchy boat-men  
Among the huge bullrushes where for ever  
Dwells the uncaptured serpent six yards long,  
Whom the small fish warping the waters' brim  
Decline to notice. Then came orange-orchards,  
Rising above the sea-cliff's bridle-roads;  
And azure-flaming waves around rock-caves  
Whence the pine thrust its elbows; then the dirge  
Of sunless streams down cold black buttresses  
Of vaster porticoes hurled up at heaven;  
And then the patient mountain-stairs past peril,  
Triumphant in the eyrie of a hamlet  
That hears the constant silvering of the springs  
And smiles in the mountain-steep among its cherries  
Above the green air-crystal of the valley.

We knew them, we had seen the lights of evening  
Moon-mimic here; and heard through dew-bells dim  
The strings that men cicada-like set murmuring.  
Here, cried our hearts, tune might be found at length,  
And all our dust laved in this garden of waters,  
Our hurry halted by these giant rocks,  
Whose coldness is a kindness, and above  
There should be purer beams from heaven;  
—no distance,

Sea, landslide, chasm, nor crossway of our life  
Divided us that moment from the unknown  
Pilgrimage singing in the stranger's mind.

### *The Daimyo's Pond*

THE swallows come on swift and daring wings,  
Their daring wings to dip with pure delight  
In the mild pond: once more the kind fate brings  
My heart that moment, and the world is bright.  
The lilies there, the white ones and the red,  
From the green cloudy deeps look up to heaven,  
And antique holm-oaks sheltering their calm bed  
Seem blessing Earth for such sweet duty given.

Look, how that old man, face like parchment tanned,  
Wrinkled, mouth-shrivelled, silently is come  
To the high bank, a bucket in his hand—  
He beats upon it as it were a drum: .  
He beats a solemn summoning monotone,  
And through the secrecies that under shroud,  
The water-shapes steal towards his gonging drone,  
The lonelineses gather in a crowd.

Moon-pallid some come gliding through the green,  
Great fishes, yet for phantoms passing well;  
Others like opals rosy-rayed convene,  
Jewels of June waters, to that simple bell;  
Dark as barbaric dreams, there others swim,  
And now to that old labourer's wish a host  
Of splendours circle mingling, to the brim  
Fanning and fawning, flame and dream and ghost.

Would that I might by means as plain as this  
Bring many a mystery from life's shadowy pool,  
Enchant the live gems from the unknown abyss,  
And make them seen, the strangely beautiful.

What measured syllables must I resound,  
Oh, what most simple and most secret spell  
For hidden fancies waits there to be found?  
Who knows that incantation, and will tell?

### *A 'First Impression' (Tokyo)*

No sooner was I come to this strange roof,  
Beyond broad seas, half round the swaying world,  
Than came the pretty ghost, the sudden sweet  
And most sad spirit of my vanished child:  
From the bare corners of the unknown room  
She peeped with beauty's eyes, till my eyes rained  
Their helpless tears once more; and there, and there  
Was my dead baby baffling with dream presence,  
And singing, till I thought I must be mad—  
Was not all silent? yet, I heard her song.  
Child, will not Orcus yield you? that small voice  
Wafts, as I know, from where I cannot come,  
And that smile glimmers like the ethereal flowers  
In your far meadows: would that earth's kind flowers  
Might now be golden in your toddling path!

Thus moved my musings, till at length I heard  
From neighbouring doors slid back along their grooves  
Small children scurrying, with the hastiest joy,  
And quick young voices planning glorious play;  
I looked, and saw some in their dresses bright  
Laying themselves a garden in the dust,  
With broad green leaves to be their noble trees,  
With beds marked out, and buds desired to grow.  
Oh, millions, millions in this world (I cried)  
Are the glad children blossoming fast and fair,  
Filling both homes and homeless hearts with airs  
Of young eternity; and other worlds

Have their child millions too, so kind in this  
Is nature; and though one of these dear blooms  
Fall, still great childhood lords it all the way,  
And the whole earth may see and hear and glory.

The children shouted as this way and that  
They hurried, and I glittered with their light,  
And loved them, as if kindred of my own,  
And felt glad faith in nature's motherhood.  
To me, were not two younglings given and spared?  
I saw them in the Suffolk lane; high flowed  
The tide of love and surety in my breast.  
But still, I saw a ghost, and lacked one child.

## *Ornamentations*

THE curving cranes with serpent necks  
Knotted on these enamelled streams,  
The gloating mouths thrust out to vex  
The red-eyed war-gods' frenzy dreams,  
The inscrutable and dog-like grin  
Of demi-lions lock me in!

With countless crafty manacles  
Dead men's dexterity strives to bind,  
Like some machine that all but feels,  
The amazed and apathizing mind.  
Cornices, crannies, shape in shape,  
Bud glittering eyes, defy escape.

Heavily hangs this haughty air,  
Drum, knell and drone commingling slow;  
Claw-tendrils reach, man-monsters glare;  
The victim heart prepares to know  
Art's terror, dragon genius—till  
Thought spies one rose or daffodil.

## *Far East*

OLD hamlets with your fragrant flowers  
And honey for the bee,  
Your curtained taverns, chiming towers,  
Droning songs and twilight hours  
And nodding industry—

Fine fields, wide-lapped, whose loveliest-born  
Day's first bright cohort finds,  
And steals away; whose lustier corn  
The red-faced churl invades at morn  
And proud as Cæsar binds—

Uplands and groves that from the West  
Have the last word for me,  
Think not your image in my breast  
Was darkened when I sang my best  
Beside an Eastern sea.

Beside an Eastern sea the pines  
In tufty spinneys drowse,  
The firefly-grass beneath them shines  
Blue-lanterned, and the chaliced vines  
Climb witch-like to the boughs;

And girdled green there bask the plains  
Where, with his timeless smiles,  
And mushroom-hat, brown Vigour gains  
His splindling roots, his haulms, his grains—  
The Oriental Giles.

He serves a god much like your own,  
Who, peeping from the rows,  
Brings gourds the greatest ever grown,  
And peerless pumpkins; smooths the down  
Of these fruits, lacquers those.

Thence the young child at home awaits,  
Bright-peering as a mouse,  
Her share of country delicacies,  
And chatters bold to her young mates  
About the smoky house.

The bronze cicada twangs all day,  
And the silver-soft at night  
Cools the snake's thicket by the way  
Where heaps the sturdy disarray  
Of husbandry's delight.

In rural music bold or frail  
Contentment's anthem fills,  
And, roving the rude-ripened vale,  
If restless spirits sometime fail,  
Here too are heavenly hills.

Sleep's master-dream there stands alone:  
The mount of East and West!  
The still hour come, his monstrous cone  
Is a timid flower this morning blown,  
Now folded like the rest.

### *Eastern Tempest*

THAT flying angel's torrent cry  
Will hurl the mountains through the sky!  
A wind like fifty winds at once  
Through the bedragoned kingdom runs,  
An army of rain slants icy stings  
At many a wretch afield who clings  
His cloak of straw, with glistening spines  
Like a prodigious porcupine's.  
The reptile grasses by his path  
Wind sleek as unction from that Wrath  
Which with a glassy claw uproots  
The broad-leaved *kiri*, flays and loots  
Torn and snarled sinews, leaves for dead



The young crops with the shining head,  
While blotched blunt melons darkly dot  
The slaughtered swathes like cannon-shot.  
The lotus in each pond upheaves  
Its sacred, slow, appealing leaves,  
And many a bush with wrestling jerk  
Defies the dæmon's murderous work—  
Yet nature stares white-lipped, to read  
In Chance's eye what desperate deed?

A kinder god discerns, replies,  
And stills the land's storm-shouts to sighs;  
The clouds in massy folds apart  
Disclose the day's bright bleeding heart,  
Huge plumes and scarves black-tossing wide  
As if a Kubla Khan had died!  
From flame to flame the vision glows,  
Till all the pools of heaven uncloze  
The lotus-light, the hue, the balm  
Of wisdom infinitely calm.

### *Evening Music*

LIKE a great bat's wing angled on the West  
The dead volcanoes, blue and silent, stand.  
Nothing could seem more finally at rest,  
Colour alone can change their mask: her hand  
From those stone lips, which once ensanguined night  
With shouting hell-fire, now allures a gleam  
Like rosy childhood's love, an amaranth-light.  
Darkness comes on her in this fabling dream.

Now light your lanterns, every thorp below  
Those monsters in their calm of long ago,  
And strike your strings' cicada-tinglings: dame,  
Sing at your silkwork; yet, musicians, mark—  
Your verse and motive through the dewy dark  
Uttered themselves even here when those still peaks  
hurled flame.

## *Inland Sea*

HERE in the moonlit sea,  
While swift we fly, while tranced we gaze,  
The fishers wind their ancient ways:  
Now like sea-lilies loom their luring sails,  
Or heaven's envoys walking fountained vales;  
And now by one deflection dark,  
Like waiting vultures of the night  
Each pirate blackness skulks, a murderous mark  
Begotten by a thing of light,  
Like apprehension's baffling destiny.

## *The Quick and the Dead*

ONCE we three in Nara walked  
Where pomp and fame look through the leaves;  
With sabred shades we walked and talked  
By lacquered gates and bow-like eaves,  
By pools where carp doze through their green  
Eternities, to lonelier shrines  
Where mossy courtyards lie serene  
Beneath some peasant-planted pines.

Less of that giant, surly bell  
Whose black voice warned us at all hours  
My late remembrance likes to tell,  
Less of the Buddha as he lours  
With thick curled skull and dead man's eye,  
Of old wives' faithful groan of prayer,  
Of fire-robed ritual trooping by,  
Than the plain joy, three friends walked there.

## *The Inviolable*

THERE on the white Pacific shore the pines  
Still serve their jealous gods, and late and soon  
The murmur runs along their rugged lines,  
"What black ship\* waits the crash of our typhoon?"

And in this vigil circled, calm and proud,  
God-gates and temples glow with changeless noon,  
Their mysteries awing that young seraph-cloud  
Swan-like between the mountain and the moon.

\**Black ship*, i.e. foreign warship as introduced by Commodore Perry

## *Building the Library, Tokyo University*

### *Night Scene*

LIKE men of fire, in painful night,  
The Eastern builders thud  
Their iron round; wild bubbles of light  
From Babel's angles scud.

The hammer's fierce brain-battering shout  
In bursts of power rebels,  
Puts unheard melodies to rout,  
Drowns heaven's songs and bells.

And yet it serves their quiet will,  
And builds them one more home  
Where nooks shall be most kind and still  
For the great Muse to come!

## *On a Small Dog,*

*thrust out in a Tokyo street soon after his birth, and rescued in vain*

*Animula vagula blandula*, foundling dear,  
So deep a hold have you already won  
On our tired hearts? so great a joy have you to give?  
So sharp a fear?  
Can your tininess unseal so hot a tear  
And prayer, that you should live?  
Like these cherry-flowers here  
Whose life thin-spun  
Seems by its own ghost haunted—but no more words!  
Save, all heaven's luck befriend you,  
Blind eyes and feeling hands,  
That take us for all-surety and all-love,  
And so to sleep.

## *The Author's Last Words to his Students*

FORGIVE what I, adventuring highest themes,  
Have spoiled and darkened, and the awkward hand  
That longed to point the moral of man's dreams  
And shut the wicket-gates of fairyland:  
So by too harsh intrusion  
Left colourless confusion.

For even the glories that I most revered,  
Seen through a gloomed perspective in strange mood,  
Were not what to our British seers appeared;  
I spoke of peace, I made a solitude,  
Herding with deathless graces  
My hobbling commonplaces.

Forgive that eyeless lethargy which chilled  
Your ardours and I fear dimmed much fine gold—  
What your bright passion, leaping ages, thrilled  
To find and claim, and I yet dared withhold;  
These and all chance offences  
Against your finer senses.

And I will ever pray for your souls' health,  
Remembering how, deep-tasked yet eager-eyed,  
You loved imagination's commonwealth,  
Following with smiling wonder a frail guide  
Who bears beyond the ocean  
The voice of your devotion.

\*In the school of English Literature, at the Tokyo Imperial University,  
1924-1927



## *OCCASIONAL PIECES*





## *A Japanese Evening*

ROUND us the pines are darkness  
That with a wild melodious piping rings  
While in the ditches  
Slow as toads in English gardens  
The little landcrabs move.  
We re-discover our path,  
And, coming to the cottage, are greeted  
With hierophantic usherings and oracles,  
And a grin behind the screen, I imagine.  
We guess full fathom five, and take up the chopsticks.  
The metal-blue cucumber slices,  
Rice, string beans,  
And green tea over,  
The housekeeper looking kindly amazement  
At the master of the house  
Soon makes all shipshape.  
After all, they possess an American clock,  
A very fine, a high-collar clock.  
She sits on the mat, awaiting the next oddity.

Lanterns moon the outer darkness,  
And merrily in come floating  
(So gently they foot the honourable straw)  
Three young girls, who sit them down.  
A conference;  
Almost the Versailles of the Far East:  
The master, beaming,  
His white hair in the lamplight seeming brighter with his pleasure,  
Asks me what I call *O tsuki sama*.  
Moon.  
Moon.  
Moon.  
He has got it; right first time,  
But not the next.

Moooni.

(The housekeeper cannot suppress her giggles,  
*Okashii*, she says, and so it is.)

We now pass naturally to the  
Electric Light.

But he will not have that,  
There are no things like that in heaven and earth  
In his philology.

I repeat—what I said;

He repeats—what he said.

We close at Erecturiku 'Rightu.

We fasten also on:

The cat, who becomes catsu,

The dog, who proceeds doggi,

(And I suspect has rabies beginning);

Himself, O-Ji-San, Orudu Genturuman,

And all sorts of enigmas.

The girls are quicker, more nimble-throated,  
And will reproduce exactly the word, but he lays the law down;

Having re-orientated Fan,

Which they pronounced Fan,

Into Weino,

He instructs them how it ought to be pronounced,

Obediently young Japan reiterates his decision,

Not without an ocular hint to the stranger

That they have concealed the other rendering in their minds

I hear their voices tinkling, lessening

Over the firefly grass,

Along the seething sand below the pines,

At the end of the entertainment.

### *Recollections of Christ's Hospital*

Book, lie you there: such borrowed wings

Droop sadly when the morning springs,

And in my heart a spirit sings

A sunrise air,

An air that links the pride of boys  
With elder character and poise,  
Playing on hopes and dreams and joys  
I used to share.

Now soars the note, now sighs, now booms,  
Is blithe as April showering blooms,  
Is grave as Bodley's chaptered rooms—  
All calmly blends

To this cool gale that laves my cheek,  
And divine morning's rosy streak  
Lights up the brows of these who speak,  
Old and young friends.

Sound awakes sight; the secret song  
Is panorama free and strong;  
From music's doors like princes throng  
The phoenix hours.

See, those in playing-fields excel,  
And crowning action casts its spell  
On humble hundreds watching well  
Their heroes' powers;

And those with no less sinew speed  
In many a classic grove or mead,  
Longing to bear that torch indeed  
That lights all time.

With faith so bright our WOODHAMS burst  
Through gusts and sleet to finish first,  
And gallant STEVENSON rehearsed  
The antique rhyme.

And all in harmonied advance  
Were manning for rich circumstance,  
And beauty was the ordinance  
Of that dear school:

In chime, in hymn, in careful trade,  
In sunshine contest, far parade,  
In storied pane, and statued shade,  
    In honour's rule.

Still through the queenly-gentle land  
How many a clear-eyed beaming band  
With Oberon's folk strayed hand in hand!  
    Past woodcourts dim

Far gates gleamed white; petals and dews  
Fell to adorn our Tudor shoes;  
Even wailing winter's foam and ooze  
    Was life in limb.

O fading sense! O swift, as deep,  
Departing anthem! Will must weep;  
Words like consumption's shadows creep  
    Though love upsoars;

Though I would give my best, to tell  
Those annals, each fine syllable;  
Perhaps, to-day, some happy bell  
    Reveals those doors

Where Lamb once passed, the master soul,  
To hear Saint Matthew's sermons roll,  
And the young multitude extol  
    Kind London's love,

And, echoing fainter, leads away  
To those new roofs in Sussex clay  
Where nests that pledge of heaven, that ray  
    Nought can remove.

## *Sonnet*

*On Receiving from the Clarendon Press  
the New Facsimile Edition of Christopher Smart's*

### *"Song to David" 1763*

THE Song itself! Thus the bright-templed rhyme  
Before the secret-smiling author came;  
Thus stood the page where thus he wrote his name  
With instinct of his triumph over time!  
It is a mantle fit for such a man,  
And humble Fletcher\* of St. Paul's Churchyard  
Knew what perhaps none but a master can  
And in his own gift understood the bard.

Now Oxford, Time's delight, with joy renews  
Whate'er his press achieved of strength and grace  
Meet for the symmetry of a great Muse,  
And the old friend returns with an old face.  
Thrice-happy Christopher's evangel light!  
In this black ink his love shall still shine bright.

\*The Original Printer

## *Solutions*

THE swallow flew like lightning over the green  
And through the gate-bars (a hand's breadth between);  
He hurled his blackness at that chink and won;  
The problem scarcely rose and it was done.

The spider, chance-confronted with starvation,  
Took up another airy situation;  
His working legs, as it appeared to me,  
Had mastered practical geometry.

The old dog dreaming in his frowsy cask  
Enjoyed his rest and did not drop his task;  
He knew the person of "no fixed abode,"  
And challenged as he shuffled down the road.

These creatures which (Buffon and I agree)  
Lag far behind the human faculty  
Worked out the question set with satisfaction  
And promptly took the necessary action.

By this successful sang-froid I, employed  
On "Who wrote Shakespeare?" justly felt annoyed,  
And seeing an evening primrose by the fence  
Beheaded it for blooming insolence.

### *Under a Thousand Words*

"A thousand words on Courage."—This request  
Dropped on me like a bomb on a sandbag shelter,  
And after much vague mental repetition  
Ranging from La Boisselle to Lord Macaulay,  
And metaphysical cross-examination  
On memories of conspicuous gallant conduct,  
I gave it up.

That afternoon our boat  
Touched on a mud-flat, which we chose to cross,  
And as we waddled through it, a three-inch crab  
Disputed progress; one of his arms was gone;  
The other he held ready like a boxer,  
And backed and sidled to our every movement,  
His one arm ready; and to command full view  
Of the two monsters who had crossed the frontier,  
He strained his body backward, and stood tilted,  
Parrying every stroke we acted at him,  
Eyeing us, holding the line.

"But you call this Instinct."

## *The Author of "The Great Illusion"*

SOME men, we say, are sent before their time;  
Far back in general shadow their one lamp  
Is seen from their high tower; alone they climb  
To watch while the world dreams. Beyond the camp  
Of nations arming twenty years ago,  
One mind with gathering power and light remained;  
The million thought the dream above, below  
The action. This mistake we ascertained  
Down ravenous precipices; at last slow-mending  
From the hacked wounds of our proud error's field,  
We find the new age daily apprehending  
What Angell, had we listened then, revealed;  
A tragic gratitude, whence none the less  
The rose shall dominate the wilderness.

## *On Mr. Frederick Porter's Room of Pictures, 1930*

THE Sun's your radiant painter, he  
With sudden flush and verdancy  
Will often at one stroke transform  
Grey deathliness into a warm  
Interior; then the void is filled,  
The ghosts are driven, the goblin killed,  
And in a picture-sphere we pass  
Like pictures over mirrored grass;  
The spirit in this sea of hues  
Finds the refraction that renews,  
Is given a sign, is given an eye  
And swift possesses earth and sky.

Here of the sunbeam's fruitful art  
I find a human counterpart,  
And from the gleaming evidence

Feel beauty through a seventh sense;  
Where this discernment lights the track,  
The prison's rock-wall is a wrack  
Dispelled by Prospero's wind or wand,  
And happy islands sing beyond;  
Let this kind energy but take  
A thing of disproportioned make,—  
A house of childish non-design,—  
That thing becomes a friend of mine;  
Upon the alien doors and walls  
This natural and rare glory falls,  
The local grows the transmarine,  
And much grey work blooms into green;  
Those flowers he chooses, though born fair,  
Have found the same enchanted air,  
And double-fragranced with his blessing  
Seem for some white saint's possessing,—  
Yet not out of common range,  
The Sun's creation is not strange;  
Fortune haunts us, moments bloom  
Like these, and Life's a pictured room.

### *Old Remedies*

THE yardman, he with the coins on his watch-chain, stood  
Joking the housewife where she tied to the rafter  
A monstrous puffball found in the dust of the wood.  
"You'll come when you cut yourself next." He replied in laughter,  
"Them old remedies won't do a morsel of good."

This I heard;  
This like many a chance-arriving word  
About my brain with the iron refrain of a mill-wheel's round  
recurred.  
Yet, being in the day's machine fresh-hacked,  
This night I pray the dewy stars to act,



The stars, and moon, once of sweet influence known,  
Has even the moon a dusty puffball grown?  
Are those old remedies of sovran grace  
Unable now to touch the case?

### *The Meadow Stream*

YOUNG joy to me is as the miser's gold,—  
I tell it often, but have never told!

The boy has called for his expectant friend  
At the Swan yard; this day they moved to spend  
In pastures, not beyond the church-tower's eyes,  
But in their faith immense for enterprise.  
The clock is beating nine, no time to waste,  
Adventure's ceremoniousness is haste;  
They take the path where lucky cherries fall,  
Pass gardens where the golden marrows sprawl,  
Their willow-rods ride on their shoulders, clear  
Of elders damp and brambles arching here;  
Before, behind, on his own interest jogs  
The mongrel Bell, whose shaggy shapeless lugs  
And one sharp eye protest his love of war;  
And look, the pastures! Summer evermore!  
Acres immeasurable, Arabian airs,  
Streams with a thousand changes, reedy lairs,  
Pavements of amber, cavernous recoils,  
Water that sleeps, and that which sings and toils,  
And feathery jungles, and strong cloistering boughs  
Where well the fugitive King might make his house.

But kings and fairies too must take their turn;  
The hunter's passion now is strong to burn;  
Yet here the hunters and the hunted seem  
Equally matched; the baits float down the stream,  
And brilliant eyes refuse, and fins deflect,  
And claim for water-spirits more respect.

One gudgeon, deigning movement, looks and nibbles,  
And twenty others sleep among the pebbles;  
Ambition stoops to victims of less size,  
And stonefish come to land in blazing dyes,  
So unexpected and so beautiful  
That they live on in the small sand-wharfed pool;  
And, while these there explore their bounds, the zest  
For taking others has been much decreased;  
Now, murmurs noonday, the most splendid flowers,  
Supplied with golden light, dream silver showers;  
Now what could be more sweet to boys or gods  
Than that cold flash of water to which nods  
The overhanging fern? Nothing more sweet;  
Wave-fingers at the breast make the heart beat  
As though a star's white light in raindrops fell  
On the bare forehead. Thus the sacred well  
Is passed, and now the far root-canopy  
Issues its people, swift and slippery,  
Past ivory feet, and bodies light as reeds.

These are discovery's moments, and what heeds  
Old Bell there, with his world of bones and rats,  
Of most irreverent birds, large cows, and cats?  
Panting he lies, and simulates content  
Except for one lean wasp, but mark the event.  
Seized by his sudden masters, down he plumbs  
In the deep swim, from which he humbly comes,  
And pulls, and scales the mound, and flounces free  
His deluged coat, and rolls assiduously.  
That done, he grins, and cordially lies down  
Again, and in again his dogship's thrown:  
Patiently paddling out, he climbs the shore,  
Dries, creeps a little apart; perhaps once more  
This thing may happen; he had best go wide,  
And still be friends with distance on his side;  
"Too much of water" has been cause of grief.

The air is glowing like a cankered leaf;  
Thunder is on the march, his brazen shield

Waves a red horror over the free field;  
He towers aloft, and holds his black brow high,  
Gestures his oath in fire; the sheepfolds cry,  
The trees sham dead, and young adventurers run  
To find a shelter, but where offers one?  
The war in heaven advances with a mass  
That turns each oak into a piece of grass,  
The enchanted meadow whizzes rain and flame  
And blackness volumes, volleys. These who came  
With such wild-rosiness now palely hide,  
And, when the roar is lessened, the high tide  
Of violence falling back in a grey foam,  
Chill and monotonous, their path is home;  
There, though they know it not, the secret flowers  
Of all their travelling's delighted hours,  
And thence, before to-morrow's dawn, it springs  
That they are one with elves and legend-kings,  
That light beyond the sun's is on their skies,  
And oaks, and brooks, and fishes' human eyes.

## *The Doomed Oak*

*An Imitation of Anatole France*

In the warm wood bedipped with rosy day  
The huge gnarled oak, the father of his race,  
Stoops to the mound his battered battle-array,  
And suns himself, a crone in a lone place.

His children choked beneath his darkness; he  
Swelled his triumphant centuries with the dead;  
Sent the sap swirling in strong arm and knee,  
And breathed in heaven with his monarchic head.

But now his proudest branches are black bones  
That start out dreadfully from his green crown,  
And in his shattered bosom garrisons  
Of mining grubs have driven their shafts deep down.

The spring sap comes to aggravate what bleeds  
Corrupted from his stagnant bitter flesh,  
A whole world in his mossy carcass breeds,  
Grey lichen grips him in a rusty mesh.

Ever some nerveless timber that drew breath  
In him, snaps on him, falls; one louder gust  
Could close the centuried business of his death.  
Aye, chance, to-day he topples to the dust.

For caterpillars with their emerald rings  
Already from his suspect foliage veer;  
A realm of insects lifting sharded wings  
Of azure, scurry along his hide in fear.

Since yesterday the swarming bees have quit  
Their clay smallholding in his boughs; the clan  
Of hornets, struck this morn with panic fit,  
Are gone to found a new fort where they can.

A lizard, where the trunk is gashed, darts out  
His meagre head; surveys, and doubts; is gone.  
O see, night wraps the icy hulk about,  
And brings the bisson mildews hurrying on.

### *A Thought from Schiller*

EVENING falls: to numbered night  
Day succeeds; and dark and light  
I journey peering, praying for  
The promised city's golden door.

Mountains barricade my track,  
Cataracts shout their sharp "Go back!"  
Up sheer cliffs my hacked path crawls,  
My spidery bridge sways over the falls.

# *The Geographer's Glory*

or, *The Globe in 1730*

WHEN through the windows buzzed the way-lost bee  
Into a drowsy room that held no honey,  
Whose solemn clock surveyed the merry swarm  
Of boys intent on chapbook and fools' tricks,  
At length the old Geogràpher resumed,  
His desk; when several close observers noted  
Signs that his late reappearance might be due  
To a well-met friend, and the cheerful bottle to give him.  
Meanwhile the master, laying down his hat,  
His gold-laced hat, and tossing his wig's three tails,  
Poising a quill, and letting it fall to the floor,  
Replacing his hat, caressing a small Globe,  
Saddling his nose, descanted thus:

“Boys, boys,

I must desire you'll ever pay respect  
To our most ripe, most profitable theme,  
The Globe, and grammar of Geography.  
It is a mine, exceeding rich Peru,  
And, though some owlish critics dub it dry,  
Exceeds for banquet-like variety  
The City feast. Observe this Globe. My lads,  
The vast terraqueous ball whereon we dwell,  
And here with newest nicety represented,  
Is full of wonders, which our countrymen  
And others of congenial quality  
Have with much circumstance of truth reported.  
—Away, ye flies; back to Beelzebub.—  
I, yes, as I was saying, this grand Globe  
Is full of wonders. While the pallid herd  
Of Græcians limit their pedantic gaze  
To some prodigious *nominativus pendens*,  
Or harry some Athenian cobbler's ghost,  
Let us imbibe—I say, let us imbibe  
Full draughts from our true Arethusan fountains.

As I, this very moment, sit in London  
(And do not know where I could sit more gladly)  
I scan the extended masterpiece of Earth:  
By this Globe's use we readily determine  
The hour when the Great Mogul sits to dine  
In India, or the Czar in Muscovy.  
This Globe assures me, there's a place on Earth  
Where, though the air blows pure, the *genius loci*  
Is such that no two friends can there continue  
In mutual love and friendship for two minutes.  
O sad amazement, should two noble youths  
(Collins for instance and—you, you rascal Hargrave)  
Of virtue and of studious parts, who long  
Shared the same attic, pored on the same map,  
Be shipwrecked there!

Now in the South of China,  
A certain city's numerous population  
Both male and female, though they use the gait  
That commonly is used in Paul's Church-Yard,  
Appear to strangers walking on their heads,  
Inverted. O, but one of many marvels.  
Blest be the Globe! O that the Lord would grant me  
Before I die a journey into Denmark,  
There to survey the famous Globes in Gottorp,  
And honour Tycho Brahe. But less cheerly  
Would I in New Castile draw near that Lake  
Which in presentiment of hurricanoes  
Raves at the sky, and howls man on to doom.

These truths surpass all fiction; yet truth bids  
I should not daub where she herself is plain.  
You have heard high legends of the Elysian Fields,  
The poets' vaunted theme; but, in the fact,  
They are an ordinary plot of ground,  
Where higglers tie the goat or panniered ass,  
Near Naples.

I must, in parenthesis,  
Observe, that the opening mind's credulity

Stands in much danger from these plaguy poets.  
Avoid their siren song, boys; learn betimes  
To shun the glittering counterfeit of rhymes.

Thus freed the maze of error, forth we rove  
On our grand tour of reason and delight;  
Whether to pause among the holy relics  
Of Palestine, and view the cave and fountain  
Whence great St. John emerged with burning eye  
To make the greater Prophet's pathway plain,  
Or find each several scene of that high Suffering  
By which we hope at length to inhabit heaven.  
Truth still shall guide us; even at Scanderoon,  
Though Jonah's Pillar be alleged the place  
Where the vast Fish disgorged the man of grief,  
We must reserve some doubt. Yet, did we yield  
Entire persuasion there, our fault were less  
Than what some dreaming ancients make, who'd hold  
The Whale swam round one quarter of the World  
Within three sunsets.

O most crude Excess,  
Base Non-Geography, ye weeds of life,  
And obstinate as Jews, who would not hear  
The Joyful Gospel first announced to them  
By Christ with musical appeal, heard not,  
Saw not, and keep their stiff necks to this-day.

Still as we go, the teeming mind of Heaven  
Supplies each query, and wonder walks with use:  
Our trees, in temperate Britain, that embower  
Noble estates, and cool the alehouse bench,  
Become those wooden walls that Spain respects,  
And leafy rustling grows the Lion's roaring.  
To several regions, several trees; there's one  
In Mexico, where shops are few, that gives  
Honey and vinegar, water, oil and wine—  
Its limpid liquor passes as all these  
By shrewd contrivance. Mark as well, my lads

And keep the flag of Britain in the masts  
Of thundering navies."

This great accent reached,  
He paused, and nodded. The clock ticked, the fly  
Walked round the Globe; till he, with sudden shock,  
Struck with a silence, rubbed his eyes to find  
The audience gone, plainly to view at once  
Under his universal inspiration  
Those fruitful wonders of the natural world.

## *The Nun at Court*

WITH what voluptuous and distorted care  
Majesty seeks the kiss of La Vallière!

At first this love was amply cloaked; the king  
Was for Versailles to see fresh marble spring;  
Slipt from the court, what should he covet more  
Than private interim, alone to explore  
The crescent symmetries of wall or walk?  
To whom his judgment? Echo's known to talk.  
So Louis, art's guilt votary, seeks design,  
And in the fact finds what he deems divine.

Here a strong troop of whispers would be heard,  
They say, "the king's in love" was no new word.  
Love, most of all the monosyllables,  
Runs in its hue from heaven's blue light to hell's;  
The king, if eyes and ears beat stone and night,  
Has not disdained to follow its murkier light.  
The lady to his lustful brother wed  
For him prepares the banquet and the bed,  
A crime, as some would preach; would, if they knew.  
Then come, sweet folly, you have work to do;  
Forbidden Henrietta's to be played  
Behind the vinery of the waiting-maid.  
With nice gradation wise, the withered Queen  
Shall view with sanction the chaste libertine.



The maid is—where?

The fete grows late and dark,  
The king in moth-light traverses the park,  
His eye will find the nymph if nymph be near,  
And four have strayed into the bosquet here.  
Soft, sire, behind this beech; from that to this;  
Now close enough to hear, almost to kiss.  
One voice adores d'Abancourt, one d'Armagne,  
De Guiche the third; the day's all gold again  
In these half-singing sighs. One more's to sing:  
"Look on these men when midst them stands the king;"  
Thence in Versailles with rich Corinthian care  
Magnetic moves the king of La Vallière.

The best proportion is not too severe,  
To beauty's law some lack of law is dear;  
This voice heard in a grove, familiar grown,  
Meant no white attitude of measured stone.  
Some fault she had; some found cold skill to blame  
Her pretty mouth, and even that she walked lame,  
Nor was her stature such as these admired;  
She smiled, walked, gazed,—and every heart desired.  
Blue-gazing, truthful-smiling, see her gleam  
Beside the tulip-urn and the shrill stream.  
Ribbons, brocades, fans, pearls are hers, and yet  
She hardly knows them taken in the net;  
The net she spread was meant for one proud wing;  
She loved the man who chanced to be a king.

O, now be all your wishes, Lady, given,  
Exchange the rest for one white pearl, bright Heaven!  
Honour and ardour both she prays for; why  
Their conflict under that serenest sky?  
Stubborn they combat, so this life is made;  
Away to noiseless, unvictorious shade;  
But from her convent, when the king appears,  
She steps to the decision and its tears.  
Ever the Queen, and endless others, hoard

Whatever shows of this in glance or word.  
Towards her sacrifice great pomp proceeds,  
The king in tournament mocks Phoebus' deeds,  
Divinities and Epochs haunt the grove,  
Pan pours the wine, and mimic mountains move,  
And, the third day, the marvellous lake displays  
The Palace of Alcinous ablaze;  
The sky grows foul, wet winds shake the pavilions;  
The king's fires leap to dazzle one, and millions.

The Queen looks sidelong from these twinkling shows  
When her great son has gained the tourney's rose  
To her who yet pursues a doubtful course.  
That course soon ends; and yet the girl's remorse  
Contrives a subtler mask than any played  
By Louis or Molière. Yet unbetrayed,  
She counts the days, and midnight helps her bring  
Into this world the daughter of the king;  
The next day comes the Queen, almost aware,  
And fierce to know. She finds her La Vallière  
Unwell, indeed, but round her room are placed  
The orange-flower and tube-rose. She's chaste!  
For these are flowers, as all declare, whose breath  
Is to a woman at child-bearing—death.

You will not long, poor mother, by this ruse  
Evade them; hear them muttering, "There is news—  
Amorous history gives you its green gown,  
Your love will swell the drinking of the town;  
Mistress and duchess now you gaze at flowers,  
Nor even mistress long. "Madam, the hours  
I pass with you would be much wittier spent  
With one less satisfied with discontent;  
Besides, the pale and vacuous looks you grow  
Declare you have no pleasure here below;  
My spaniel, Malice,—here, he dotes on you.  
Your friend de Montespan awaits; adieu!"

New palaces! years of flat minutes pile  
Upon this lady's unenchanted isle,  
Where even her daughter and her singing son  
But little vary her heart's monotone.  
Her son, with boyish courage, mounts his horse  
And hastens on the immemorial course  
To try what means the sport of siege and mine;  
The drums are beating to the battle-line  
In Flanders. Not a shot in Flanders cracks  
But round and round and round its echo clacks

In La Vallière's pale cell; the far black rain  
That rivers the trenches numbs that cloistered brain;  
The drum, the rain, the cannonade conspire  
In one hurt second of both ice and fire.  
"He fell, this every one that saw declares,  
As royal heroes fall." The mother stares  
On the most eloquent messenger of doom  
That ever graced the gangway to the tomb:  
"Dead; so; and shall I weep? Hear me, I mourn  
That this unlucky boy was ever born."  
And, turning thence, she moves her lips in prayer  
For one that was a nun even in the glare  
Of luring love, and one that knew not La Vallière.

### *The Sunlit Vale*

I saw the sunlit vale, and the pastoral fairy-tale;  
The sweet and bitter scent of the may drifted by;  
And never have I seen such a bright bewildering green,  
But it looked like a lie,  
Like a kindly meant lie.

When gods are in dispute, one a Sidney, one a brute,  
It would seem that human sense might not know, might not spy;

But though nature smile and feign where foul play has stabbed  
and slain,  
There's a witness, an eye,  
Nor will charms blind that eye.

Nymph of the upland song and the sparkling leafage young,  
For your merciful desire with these charms to beguile,  
For ever be adored; muses yield you rich reward;  
But you fail, though you smile—  
That other does not smile.

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